

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Nocturne of Sorrow III part 1/?



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Nocturne of Sorrow III part 1

MC File 4 ((part 1))

"--'Who are you?'

Asked a (green) caterpillar as he puffed on his [water pipe]. Alice couldn't answer. Who she was this morning and who she was a moment ago were entirely different things.

'I'm not myself, you see?'

--I'm not myself, you see?-- [#1]

'I don't see.'

The Caterpillar languidly answered that he did not know. Alice knew, before long, the Caterpillar would [make] a chrysalis and become a butterfly. The caterpillar couldn't immediately answer who he was at the time like this.

--Aren't I the same as he?--

'Who are you?'

Again she was asked the initial question. Alice felt a bit annoyed; she was of the opinion that, before inquiring about others, one ought to introduce oneself first. The Caterpillar, puffing away on his waterpipe, spoke.

'Why?'--"

{Lewis Carrol "Alice in Wonderland"}

From the conversation between the Caterpillar and Alice.

MC-0022 NEXT WINTER

I continued fighting. I continued (killing my heart [#2]). Ergo, my heart had long since been empty. I (probably) didn't have any value living as a person. From the past to the future, my existence was [is and will be] pointless. When someone inquired as to who I was, I answered like this: an instrument for fighting, a weapon, something along those lines. I'm afraid I'm nothing more and nothing less than that. Weapons which aren't used have no value. [I am] the same as a rock lying by the wayside. If you take that rock in hand and throw it at your enemy, it becomes a "throwing stone," man's first weapon. The rock had no intention of becoming a weapon, it being a rock and all 483/2/10<. Suddenly, one day, people meaning fight came to the "gentle wilderness" and transformed it into a "battlefield" and rocks like me which were just lying there began to be used as weapons.

There was no refusing.

There was no choice.

The rock, myself--all we could do was accept the situation. On the bloody stage called the "battlefield," we could do nothing but continue to play the part of the "fool." With each enemy killed, I lost "something" beneath the mask [I wore]. Laughter, joy, anger, kindness, sorrow, even fear itself left me. I was nobody even when I was a child. Without even a name to go by, it was obvious that I had to continue to wear the mask. That's how I am now--I'll have them call me "Doktor T."

I immigrated to Mars with Catherine during the first summer of MC 14. The only reason we came was because we thought it would be interesting to do a circus [in a place that had] a third of the gravity [of Earth]. At first, when

Catherine suggested it, I don't think she had thought too deeply about it. Here, there's an amazingly large number of earnest guys. I don't think that's a bad thing, but if they aren't handled with care, you'll be borrowing trouble. From MC 16, the Mars Federal Government started [maintaining] an army of MS ((Mars Suits)). As soon as that happened, I could smell trouble brewing, its scent floating in the air, over the ocean and in the land itself. The blood starved babes picked up a new toy and it was called a weapon. [I?] could have left well enough alone, but [I?] couldn't stomach [the thought] of more people like me appearing--people who, like me, had lost their hearts. [They] could only resolve themselves to it. I persuaded Catherine to go back to Earth. There was no way I could have her with me, given what I was about to do.

"I've always hated war, you know.....and I still do now."

"So, all the more reason to go back to Earth."

"Long ago, Relena Darlian said.....peace isn't something anybody can give," Catherine smiled gently. "[No matter where] we run, [no matter how] we avert our eyes, there's no changing how war makes people as unhappy as you and me."

"Well, I've never felt unhappy."

"If I was gone, you'd have nowhere to go back to."

"....."

Catherine and I decided to start volunteer activities to stamp out war.

There was a need to prepare MS ((mobile suits)) which would be a deterrent for the MS ((Mars suits)). As a means to compete with the Federal Army, I even thought of ways to acquire MD ((mobile dolls)) although they weren't my style 484/1/5-7<. However, the autoplant "Vulcanus" that was in Mars' orbit was being held by the Neuenheim Konzern and really wasn't in a state for us to get at it. We could only make new MS and compete [with those]. But we hoped for an elite--and if possible, made of the Gundanium alloy--mobile suit, {Gundams}. That was the ultimate weapon [and it] symbolized resistance. At the same time, the Fire Fighters ((Preventer)) dispatched by the Earth Sphere United Nations apparently had the same thoughts. One day, there was a request for our cooperation from Chang Wufei who knew about our existence. We were summoned to the Arctic Preventer base.

"The weak are panicking and attempting to fight. If this planet turns into 'The War Planet,' sooner or later the flames of war will spread to Earth." He spoke in his usual [pushy] manner.

"If that's the flow of tides, what else can we do but accept it?" I didn't say what I'd really thought. But [Wufei] knew I wouldn't.

"The only soldiers who can compete are the ones who've prepared."

".....and we'll need {Gundams}, too, eh....."

We decided to combine forces. But making new {Gundams} was a difficult path. All the past data had been completely [destroyed (lit: lost)]. Following the Mariemaia uprising, the deletion of all battle weaponry at the hands of Preventer had been perfect. Actually, I'd helped them [do it]; it's too late to complain about it now. We had managed to get a basic design of the hardware, relying on data from modern computer analysis and our own memories, but as we lacked the crucial software, it was discovered via CAD simulation that we couldn't move even the tip of a manipulator finger. Just the hardware [by itself] was an empty-headed box--the same as the pilot's coffin. The software, which was the basis of a Gundam, was that advanced. Perhaps it was because my heart was empty. Be that as it may, with our knowledge, skills, and emotional strength, it was all we could do to smelt the Gundanium alloy. An unbreachable wall stood immovable before us. Those five scientists' computer architecture, steeped in

inspired/crack-pot creativity, and advanced techniques were perfect and could not be reproduced.

Model Number XXXG-00W0
Code name {Wing Gundam 0}

Model Number XXXG-01W
Code name {Wing Gundam}

Model Number XXXG-01D
Code name {Gundam Deathscythe}

Model Number XXXG-01H
Code name {Gundam Heavyarms}

Model Number XXXG-01SR
Code name {Gundam Sandrock}

Model Number XXXG-01S
Code name {Shenlong Gundam}

They were absolutely perfect machines (and threw truly dazzling light). As for the {Mercurius} and {Vayeate}, which were designed by those scientists and could be called the successors of the Gundams, either one might be possible to build and we'd actually made an attempt to do so. It/that went against our predictions, or I should say it was just as expected. We failed/stumbled immediately. The CAD simulator determined it would run out of control and self-destruct within five minutes. Unsatisfied, I was at my wits end.

At times like these, it was good to change moods. I went out on a busy street and made like a street performer. I cocked a small hat forward on my head and performed as a clown. I pantomimed trying to move an immovable, invisible bag. The imaginary bag slowly grew bigger, and pushed or pulled it wouldn't move and at the end, I performed being crushed by it. I could earn a little money with my performances. I did that for a few days when a man called out to me.

"As good as ever, huh." He had a (nostalgic [#3]) face. "It's been a long time, Trowa."

"You don't change, do you?"

"Neither do you, apparently.....if you're not busy, I'd like to treat you to some spirits."

Alcohol wasn't simply 'alcohol,' it wasn't brandy or whiskey, calling it 'spirits' was very like Quatre. It wouldn't do to have wine or beer or any fermented beverage, either. We entered a cafe on the main street. Taking a seat at the counter, Quatre ordered a rum Rivières [#4] and I ordered a single cask [#5]. After we toasted our reunion, where I thought Quatre would put the glass to his lips, he was drunk and complained 485/2/9-10<.

"It's hard being human.....living is really hard."

"Yup."

"Also, it's especially hard to put on the years like everyone else."

"If you choose only sunny weather, you'll never get where you're going 485/2/2-3<. In retrospect, life has more rainy days and stormy ones."

"Yeah.....that's true." Quatre, with his cheek flushed, brought up the topic of my recent pantomime act. "Say, Trowa. Was there any meaning to the invisible bag that day? [#5.5]"

"Er." I'd never thought about it. It's just, weight-wise, I just assumed there was a rock in the bag, but if I was compelled to apply some meaning, maybe it was "fate" in the bag. Or perhaps it was "life." Either way, I wouldn't be crushed by either one.

"To me, I [saw] a {Gundam} in the bag." He was always like that, but this man abruptly spun words from a different dimension 485/3/17-18. "When I was a kid, I built a {Gundam}." Long ago, Quatre had been the one to complete construction of Wing Gundam 0. "But I didn't build it. It was built by resentment/hatred and revenge." Did he mean he allowed a 'god of creation' and a 'demon of destruction' to coexist in his heart? "[It was] a product of insanity and miracle. Even if I was told to remake it, it would be impossible....." I got the gist of what he meant based on the flow of the conversation.

"You saw Wufei, huh?"

"Yeah.....I don't expect to begrudge it."

To summarize Quatre's story---

Several months prior, dismantled {Gundanium mobile suits} had been discovered in an old hangar on one of the resource satellites in the possession of the Winner family. Those were the machines called {Snow White,} {Warlock,} {Prometheus,} and {Scheherazade.} These four machines were the ones used in the "Second Lunar War," which is part of the "History Buried in Darkness" that is part of neither the Earth Sphere's history books nor the Lanagrin Republic's library. Of course, it was those five scientists who manufactured them. Upon learning that [the Winners had Gundanium mobile suits], Preventers contacted Quatre. And he had apparently been requested to complete them by Chang Wufei. Quatre's sense of expiation was greater than ours. He left the management of the family affairs to his sisters and took on the job. The work, however, ran into difficulties. It seemed Quatre yet again felt a deep responsibility (because of it). I wanted to help him with all my heart. But my heart, of course, was empty.

"I might not understand the concept of the 'software.'"

"That's because we're the pilots," Quatre murmured and raised his (more than) half-full glass of rum to eye level. "A blender is absolutely necessary in the making of spirits."

"A blender?"

"Say this is the finest Irish whiskey," he continued with a flushed face, but his eyes were (contrarily) calm. "You try to recreate it but you can't get the same flavor, no matter how perfectly detailed the recipe or even if you have arranged to have the same ingredients ((barley and water, etc)) and use the same tools ((the barrel and the peat, etc))." I understood that emotionally. Among the near limitless number of spirits, none had the same flavor. The age/year and the size of the bottle would make even the same brand [of spirits] something completely different. "The master blender--the one who makes the spirits--manages the unblended malt whiskey, watches over [everything] from the preparation for brewing to the distillation, tries various blends, tests the aroma and flavor, and stores it and after several decades, sends it off as a finished product."

Ah, I see--those five scientists were (overly) brilliant master blenders. This metaphor was far easier to understand than an essay on software engineering.

"And we're the bar tenders to pour that fine whiskey?" After all, a 'weapon' can do nothing but destroy. For us the act of 'completion' would probably be hard.

"That may be it." I'd said it to disparage myself but wound up simply being confirmed/acknowledged. Quatre took just one more swallow of rum. "For the best whiskey, the best sponsors must [be provided] or else proper flavor cannot be produced." However you look at it, this man who was supposed to be a light drinker went drinking and talking on and on 486/3/11-12. "The selection of the glass, the cut of the ice, the manner of pouring, the speed of stirring and

the number of stirs and then, if you want to make a cocktail, you make full use of several times that knowledge and various techniques to provide for the customer, yes that certainly seems to resemble us." Listening to Quatre's vast knowledge and [!?] was tormented by an unrelenting anxiety.

"Quatre.....would you let me help you with your work?"

"Thank you.....I thought I was going to have to ask you, Trowa."

"I'm not 'Trowa Barton' anymore."

"I'm not going by Quatre! [#6] Now, I'm going by 'Professor W'!! 'W' for Winner. 'W' for Wing."

"In that case, why don't you call me 'Doktor T.'"

"Alright."

At the Chryse subterranean factory, Professor W and I split up and commenced reforms for putting together [the four suits] and (investing) the latest technology. I was in charge of "Prometheus" and "Scheherazade." Professor W created his own software and six years later, in MC 22 ((convert that to Terran years and it easily took twelve years)) he completed {Snow White} and {Warlock}. As far as my {Prometheus} and {Scheherazade} went, they were only about eighty percent complete by that time [#7].

We heard about how long it was taking to complete even a single machine from Preventer Master Chang. Being compared to the five genius scientists, however, and there was nothing we could do about [how long it was taking]. They had, individually, completed one suit in just four years--a third of the time it was taking us. Trial model {Wing Gundam 0} had been designed in AC 186 but it [didn't leave the drawing board at first/#8] due to its excessive fighting power and high (production process) costs. Later--by AC 190, a trial manufacture of the first {Snow White} had been completed. And then, four years later in AC 194, {XXXG-01} first edition model was completed and the following year, "Operation Meteor" was carried out. These inspired/crack-pot scientists were caught by "OZ" several months later and less than two months after that, the {Mercurius} and {Vayeate} were completed. With those five scientists working together, their skills were disgustingly good.

It was First Winter of MC 21 that the only remaining Gundams were discovered. It was after the Mars Federation's first president Miliardo had been assassinated. That machine that was secretly hidden in the Lanagrin Republic was {Gundam Epyon}, the data of the basic plans was also in the memory of its ZERO system. Preventer had successfully hacked into that data. Master Chang used it as a base to start manufacturing {Nataku}, which he admirably completed in about a year. I was completely beat. Naturally, the software was something else, as it was Treize Khushrenada who designed it. Still, since I was also a Gundam pilot the same as he, I didn't think the difference would be brought home as it had been. When I think about it, at the time ((AC195-196)) the time he had had [to] act independently was longer compared to ours. In the intervals between intense battles, he likely prepared Shenlong and Altron by himself ((both were called {Nataku})), painstakingly polishing each part one by one. And now, the new machine--I take my hat off to him for the almighty focus [#9] [of his] emotional strength that's his obsession of building Gundam Epyon Bai ((this one is also called {Nataku})).

There was another job we were to do: search for pilots to fly [the suits]. We were able to bring in Professor W's younger sister Katrine Wood Winner and Nanashi. We heard from Father Maxwell that he'd begun training his son. We received news from Master Chang that "Aurora Princess" who was in [cryogenic stasis] inside "sleeping beauty" had been sent to Preventer's North Pole base. We had enough pilots for the suits. Now, he just had to complete the machines and put "Operation Mythos" into action. From the get-go, there was no option for us to pilot. No matter how they were reformed, we couldn't respond to the reaction speed these suits demanded. It may have not been impossible if we began training right from the basics, but that didn't leave enough time to [actually] fly the suits. Sure enough, physical and mental abilities equal to that of Princess Aurora [#10] were necessary. We had to tolerate Katrine's making off with the unfinished {Prometheus}. Nanashi.....the one now going by the name Trowa Phobos,

we made him go after her. We considered all possibilities and then requested Heero Yuy and Duo Maxwell at the Preventer North Pole base to intercept them. And then, we ((Catherine and Professor W[, and I])) boarded the "Chouxhook 2" [#11] and left Chryse. [We] calculated it was possible for the high-speed hovercraft Voyage, which had left from the Preventer's North Pole base, and our ship to attack on both flanks. Katrine and Trowa Phobos had encountered [each other] at the foot of Mt. Olympus. She had prepared forty {Maganacs} for the sake of driving back pursuers. That the Mars Federal Government maintained RMDs ((replica mobile dolls)) of Professor W's old support machines, the Maganacs, had been within the realm of possibilities. Ergo, we had {Snow White} and {Warlock} ready to confront [the enemy]. Even so, Katrine escaped with {Prometheus} on a Mars Federal Government hover-transport. Looks as though their predictions about the tides of war were better than ours. They knew that Phobos would give chase, that Heero and Duo would appear [at Mr. Olympus], they knew all about everything. I don't know the details, but that Phobos--with Catherine's training--had been led around by the nose was worthy of admiration. She really was Professor W's younger sister. I, however, was not of such an indifferent temperament as to let that make me give up the chase.

We thought the large-scale Mars Federation transport hover craft was heading straight to Elysium from Olympus , but it had taken a detour course towards the North Pole. I couldn't comprehend this action. When we continued to give chase, even though we didn't grasp the situation, we allowed/made Special Officer First Class Zechs Merquise of the Lanagrin republic to attack with his {Gundam Epyon} and {Virgo IVs}. Around the same time as that, we received a report that Master Change, in {Nataku} was going to intercept Zechs. Things that we hadn't predicted didn't end there. Heero and Duo dashed out in {Snow White} and {Warlock} to join in that battle. What was worse, the Mars Federation Army's aerial division appeared over Mt. Olympus. [The area] was sprinkled with five hundred unmanned flying Mars suits. If such a large corps had been prepared for [taking care of] Master Chang and the others, and against Zechs, then we would be forced to go out to support them 488/2/5-7. Was there a chance this aerial division's fierce attack was a countermeasure meant to prevent [us] from pursuing? Was it a two sided attack meant to acquire all our machines? If that was the case, I'd grossly underestimated the girl Katrina. There was also the possibility that Naina and Milu behind us were more strategists of foresight.

No, that was not possible.

The directions of Katrine's actions and the developments with the aerial division were [traveling on] different vectors. Despite the timing, there was no cooperation [between them]. If things were going to develop on a scale as large as this, certainly [the aerial division] ought to have been standing by at the foot of Mt. Olympus. As long as the tactician wasn't a fool 488/3/13, it was unthinkable to have such an unbalanced net [in which to catch us]. In point of fact, the Mars Federal Government went out [to Olympus] all in a panic after confirming via observation satellite that {Gundam Epyon} had left from the Lanagrin Republic. For a moment, [I?] expected we'd give up on recapturing {Prometheus} but it looked as though it wouldn't come to that. When we arrived at the battlefield, the unmanned Mars suits had all been purged by the appearance of {Tallgeese Heaven}. That was a result of the pilot Cyrene Wind having used the "nano-defenders." That man had continued fighting without [even] declaring to which camp he belonged. I believed/could fathom that was the case this time as well. Sure enough, {Snow White} and {Warlock} were able to join us without enemy fire from {Tallgeese Heaven}. We headed towards Master Chang and {Nataku} and Trowa Phobos in "Voyage." They (weren't allowed to) participate in the battle that occurred as we pursued. Those two were physically and mentally past their limits. If one is going to use the word limit, but if we didn't keep them close at hand, there was no telling what Duo or Heero would do.

Minutes later, the noisy troublemaker and unusually calm problem child appeared on the bridge.

"You know where Katrine is going, don't you?" As soon as he ran into the room, Duo was hollering out his discontent. "What are you chasing 'em in this old jalopy for? Ain't the 'Voyage' a sight faster?!" Like his father, he only complained as an adult 489/1/11<. I passed by him and stood before Heero, who I hadn't seen in a long time.

"Thank you for coming, Heero Yuy."

His eyes narrowed slightly and he said, "Trowa, huh?" He muttered the name I'd used a long time ago. I planned on not wearing a mask anymore, but it may have been difficult for Heero to pick up on that.

"Heero! Wow, you're just like you were back in the day!" Professor W said with admiration as he sought to shake hands.

".....Quatre, hm?" Was all he said, not responding to the [attempted handshake] as he blinked several times. It seemed he was the acme of fatigue.

"Ha ha ha.....we're all just completely changed. Oops, you don't do silly things like shake hands, right? 489/2/8-9"

"....."

"Yo, pops! Aren't you forgetting someone?" Shouted Duo in an even louder voice. "Come on! Can this bucket even give proper chase?!"

".....Oi." Heero addressed Professor W and me. "His voice is echoing in my head."

"I agree....." I looked at Katherine who was standing behind me with her arms crossed. "Would you mind, elder sister?"

"I'm not really in the mood....." [She] cast a quick glancing glare in Duo's direction. "This isn't training, wouldn't it be abuse?"

"There won't be a problem if you do it with love."

"I hope I can go easy on him."

Duo seemed to feel Catherine's bloodlust in her gaze [#12].

"Wha.....what, ma'a--" Before he could finished speaking, she landed an intense punch on the saucy brat's face. He easily flew several meters. Catherine's flow of movement, however, didn't end there. Turning elegantly to Heero's back, *bonk*.....she hit the nape of his neck with the palm of her hand.

"Ung....." Just then, he lost consciousness and fell down. "....." Just as I thought. They'd put up a good front but really, they could barely stand.

"Did you not ease up enough?" Professor W asked as he made to help Heero.

"I did for this one [Heero], but that one [Duo] used a taboo word." Since he didn't finish saying it, it was probably closer to a lynching than training.

"Yeowch! Geeze!" Duo said, standing and with a swollen cheek. "I thought you were a girl, so I let my guard down....." I was astonished. Not fainting after receiving one of those blows was pretty promising.

"Do you normally go around hitting people?" He came striding over. But Catherine didn't hesitate to give him a threatening look.

"Just so you know, you need to choose your words [wisely]! When you address me, you shall use elder sister Catherine or Miss Catherine [#13]!" Duo's eyes widened [like dinner plates]. "The next time you use a taboo word, I'll pop you one so hard, your cheeky face'll swell up like a balloon!"

"O-okay....." He felt the truth of Catherine's word or something because he grudgingly seemed to acquiesce.

"Be polite! You should say 'Yes, Miss Catherine.'" Catherine entered training mode.

"Yes, Miss.....Catherine." Duo's eyes were downcast and he was at a loss for words. I was impressed with his unexpected obedience.

"I, for one, try no to fly in the face (lit: rebel against) an older woman."

"Does that apply to the Peacecraft ladies, too?" I poked a little fun at him.

"That's stupid! They're the enemy, yo!"

"Right.....you pass."

As Professor W made Heero rest in the medical capsule, he had been calmly analyzing.

"Let's send Duo after all."

"Yeah, he should be okay if he could sit in {Warlock} for so long and still have so much energy left."

"?"

The distribution of stamina was very familiar to his body, [whether by] very much experience or by the skill of Father's special training. Also, regarding Catherine's punch, his instantly dodging the point where force was applied makes me think he's been properly trained in defense, too. He was probably naturally endowed with his physical abilities and moving body eyesight [#14]. You might call him a natural born soldier. But he was nothing like me. Naturally, [he? was] something entirely different from Professor W and Catherine. And it felt like he had a different nature from Father.

Maybe he was missing something.

Maybe he had too much of something.

I didn't yet know what that something was, what that difference was.

"Is Heero okay like that?"

"His former power haven't yet returned to its previous level as much as he thinks."

Basically, there should be no way Heero Yuy could collapse under one of Catherine's karate chops, he ought to have turned around and retaliated by the time she had taken half a step. Though Duo's getting punched should have sharpened him, he was too off his guard. Locking the medical capsule, Professor W spoke, "Using the 'ZERO system' once or so shouldn't leave him so fatigues.....looks like [we? he?] idolized/worshipped the long hibernation 491/3/1-4."

If we sent {Snow White} to the battlefield like this, [he] might self-destruct at the slightest mistake. Of all the pieces [people] under our control, Heero Yuy's (existence) was of the utmost importance. [We/I] wanted him to take care of himself.

Duo's large eyes shone over-bright as he said, "So, there's nothing to stop me from killing Relena Peacecraft?"

"You needn't worry about that.....that woman cannot be killed by you." President Relena wasn't that soft of a woman.

The large hover craft in which Prometheus had been loaded headed South from Borealis Ocean and on towards Arcadia. If they continued to take a westerly course, they'd come up on the Elysium Sea where the Furekurafu Islands are [#15]. I had Duo prepare to sally forth and make "Chouxhook 2" surface. Standing on the deck in a black cloak was {Warlock}.

"Warlock, check!" Duo reported when he had finished pre-launch preliminaries. His voice was so energetic it made me wonder just how much energy he really had 429/1/1-2. Professor W delivered the latest news via monitor correspondence.

"Duo-kun [#16], twelve Mars suits have launched from Elysium Island. All of them have pilots.....I'm afraid the ones to be intercepting you will be--"

"Naina-nee-chan [#17] and her {Merciless Fairies}, huh?"

"I believe so."

"Good.....as opponents, they're a good match!"

What a brat.

He was grinning like the "Cheshire Cat" from a certain picture book. He didn't panic even when it was twelve against one. There was [something] I had to tell this joke-cracking cut-up [and do so] in no uncertain terms.

"Listen, around here, there is a (tide current) called 'jet current.' It's fast and strong. No matter what, don't even thing about a water battle."

"Warlock, roger!"

"I'm going to start the MSS ((magnetic sandstorm))!"

"Roger!"

"Warlock, take off."

"Hit it!"

Together with a magnetic sandstorm, the black caped mobile suit took off. His departing figure looked like a bat with its jet black wings stretched out.

I made "Chouxhook 2" dive. On the bridge, Professor W was in charge of analyzing the tide of war; Catherine got to work as operator. I was the pilot--I was pretty bored since I switched on the autopilot. I crossed my arms and settled deeply into my chair, just as if I were the captain. Professor W didn't make to sit down. He'd told me before that it was easier to read the military situation standing up. Catherine immediately detected a blip on the enemy detection radar.

"One suit has broken off from the {Merciless Fairies}.....it's taking a course to make contact with Duo."

The image of the main monitor was still filled with snow. And on the radar was a digital image from the hacked weather satellite, doctored [#18] by ZERO.

Beside us, Professor W murmured, "They're able to completely read the movements of the sandstorm."

"I may have overestimated him a bit."

"Maybe you did. In this situation, there's a part for Naina Peacecraft."

"I checked the discrepancies of the enemy. It's the 'Queen of Hearts'!"

Just as Professor W had predicted.

"From the perspective of Duo-kun's character, he wouldn't do a thing like hide himself in a sandstorm."

"Yeah, he'd probably come flying out in happy, high spirits."

"You're both right. Just now, Warlock has flown out of the MSS!" [Catherine said.]

The image feed on the main monitor switched from the sandstorm. In its place appeared the image of the Queen and Warlock encountering each other.

"Hey, you doing okay, Naina-nee-chan!" Warlock's flashing scythe was swung down. That was firmly caught by the Queen of Hearts' beam sword. Compared to a beam saber, [her beam sword] had higher output and more size.

"Yes! It's been a while, Duo!" Crackling sparks of light gushed out around the area. The place they had landed upon was a small volcanic island in the Furekura-fu Archipelago. With [something] to spare, Warlock threw off the beam sword and fell back far enough to allow his beam scythe to move in an arc.

"I came by to take care of some small business."

The Queen of Hearts raised the shield in her hand to eye level and stood constantly at the ready.

"Why, the storm's cleared, isn't the weather nice?"

[Warlock] was probably a distance far enough to evade attacks by the skin of his teeth.

"I've brought lunch with me!"

The best method for competing with a beam scythe is, after first evading the first swing, to enter the internal circumference of the arc and before the second swing can be paid out, rain sword blows down upon [the scythe bearer]. Naina seemed to be calculating that very thing.

"Nice, that!" Duo attacked instantly. In synch with [his attack], the Queen of Hearts retreated at high speed and dodged the beam scythe's first swing.

"I brought sandwiches." Niana shot/fired her burners to the max and speedily dove inside the swing-arc. "Shall we eat together?" The Queen of Hearts stuck her beam sword straight out in front. A section of the black hooded cape was torn. However, only a shadow of Duo's Warlock remained and he dodged the hit from the beam sword.

"Sandwiches, you say?" There was value in that agile evasion. Moreover, the chain of actions taken from behind the Queen of Hearts was appropriately advanced. He utilized the auto-balancers skillfully. It was a speed that would make an ordinary pilot lose consciousness.

"You don't mean....?" [Duo said.] Although he'd circled round to [her] back, he went to the trouble of speaking before heaving the beam scythe. There was an explosion, but it was the Queen's shield which was destroyed.

"I made them myself! The kind that Sister Hilde taught me to make!" The Queen of Hearts jumped and bore the attack. Warlock followed, leaping into the sky. Mars gravity, having only one third the pull of Earth's, allowed both suits to leap wonderfully high.

"For real?"

"Have I ever lied?"

The Queen released the built-in attack vulcan [cannon/#19]. The damage from even a direct hit was small, but more than enough to [allow her to get] the slip.

"Of course, there's tomato." Pushing the moment [ALT: Taking advantage of the moment], she once again swung the beam sword. "Mustard and mayonnaise!" She put the out-thrust sword's power to the max, extended it spearlike,

and paid out continuous, sharp 'stabs.' Naina's pilot skills weren't half bad. She displayed straight up close-quarters combat that was enough to surpass Warlock's specialty of circular close-quarters attacking. Despite being a customized Mars suit, in man-to-man combat, there was no way it could fight equally against Warlock. But when I imagined her piloting Prometheus, a chill ran down my spine. Of course, Duo, who evaded every hit from the Queen's chain of attack, had accomplished a (fighting power) of a high standard. Just--

"Damn, I'm so hungry, I could eat a horse and chase the rider! [#20]"

[The fight would be amazing/#21] if it weren't for all the chitter-chatter. Listening to their voices alone and one would think they were really on a picnic.

"I have the chicken and ham you like, too."

"You really went all out, huh?"

No--

"It's not my birthday today."

"Something special since it's been so long."

If they were being so talkative in the midst of a fierce battle, the (level of value) might increase all the more [if they didn't talk at all]. Both suits touched down again on the volcanic island, still facing each other. Without waiting for a lead, Warlock was the first to shoot out.

"Alright.....I surrender already."

Duo carried out an attack of words and estranged violent speed 493/3/4-5<.

"So, isn't there some place quite to lay out the sheet? [#22]" Naina was the same, but she had undoubtedly finished reading the rhythm of Warlock's attack. [She?] effectively, without waste, avoided him 494/1/2. And it was unlikely they'd throw any unexpected punches.

"I'm cool with anywhere.....if I can eat!"

"I don't like this rocky terrain." The Queen of Hearts whose beam sword had been perfectly straight so far instantly changed to an arc (motion) and made [the sword] synchronized with the beam scythe's movement. When Warlock drew the arc of a figure 8, the sword retaliated with an infinitely symbol.

"Didn't we eat on junk piles when we were at the orphanage?"

"Taking off on your own when it was time for prayers, right?"

The Queen of Hearts focused her power at the point where the two circles met. No sooner had that happened then Warlock's beam scythe was (unfortunately) shot way off in the distance.

"Remember how Sister Hilde was so angry afterwards?"

I couldn't see his face in the cockpit, but I could tell from his voice that he was still smiling like the Cheshire Cat. From beneath the black cloak, Warlock withdrew a second beam scythe. There was no way Naina could not have been surprised by that, but--

"Sister's stranglehold." She sounded like she was snickering at the memory.

"Man, that hurt for real!" The attack started up again. The Queen fought back.

"Have you seen her since then?"

"Nah, I've had to babysit Father Crapswell this whole time."

The circular tracks both of them were cutting steadily/rapidly picked up speed.

"Oh, speaking of which, what is Father doing? Is he working like he should? Is he doing okay?"

"He's so happy, he could die!"

"Ah ha ha ha, that's what I thought!"

When their [weapons'] velocity reached its peak, one hit from the Queen sent Warlock's second scythe flying. If this were a fight between swordsmen who didn't use cheap tricks, Naina's Queen had overpowered Duo's Warlock.

"Do you remember that one Christmas?"

The Queen's beam sword appeared to be still jabbed into Warlock. That, however, was an afterimage.

"The one with the weird cosplay [#22.5], right!"

Warlock had instantly moved dozens of meters to the rear. There laid both of his beam scythes.

"That was funny, wasn't it?"

"Just thinking about it makes me [laugh so hard] my stomach hurts."

Warlock picked up [a scythe] in each hand, and showed he was going to fight two-scythe style. This time, he drew a double-track figure 8.

"No, that's.....jsut because you're hungry."

If it was me, I think I would have used that move from the very start, but [Duo] may have wanted to take a trump card. Warlock approached the Queen as he swayed trickily to the left and right. There wasn't space to [break into] the two-scythe circular movements. There was a fine time difference between the inner and outer (circumferences), making it difficult to get the rhythm. If she carelessly jumped inside those moving circles, she'd probably get ripped to pieces without being able to so much as parry. Nevertheless, the Queen boldly came attacking. It was a 'thrust' fast unlike any other before. Evenso, the two beam scythes crossed in an instant and completely caught the beam sword between them. This time, it was the beam sword that was thrown way off in the distance.

"Argh! I'm hungry! Now that I think about it, I haven't eaten anything since breakfast!"

"Well, why don't you seriously surrender?" Surprisingly, the Queen of Hearts took a bazooka from off her shoulder and set its sights on Warlock. If she fired from that distance, [Duo] could not use his (alter ego/otherself) or be mistaken for the afterimage [resultant] from (anomalous movement).

"Okay! Time out!" Duo contacted us via commlink. That guy was unbelievable. By that commlink, the location of 'Chouxhook 2' would be made known.

"Doktor T, this is Warlock!"

Catherine yelled her response at the radar screen, "At least eleven suits are fast approaching this submersible aircraft carrier!"

"Duo, did I not tell you not to do anything funny?"

Professor W laughed innocently.

"I've confirmed the two closest crafts! Ace of Spades! Jack of Spades!"

The Ace and Jack of Spades, hm. We'd been dealt some pretty high cards. This is 'Blackjack' after all. As for their mobility, those two were the best among the {Merciless Fairies}. I had a bad feeling about that.

"Oi, Doktor T, answer me!"

"What?"

"We wanna make a ceasefire....."

"No," I flat out refused.

Catherine continued, "I've confirmed the next wave of four suits! Eight of Hearts, Eight of Diamonds, Eight of Spades, Eight of Clovers!"

"Four of a kind....." When I muttered that, Professor W immediately negated it.

"That's the Eight Enders from Daifugou [#23].....they might be trying to effect a Revolution."

Daifugou? I didn't know that card game.

"Revolution is where the highest cards turn into the lowest. In this scenario, it probably means the Joker will become the weakest."

I sighed.

"I'm interested in the design [on the] Joker card."

"Huh.....?"

"Is the design a 'warlock'? [#24]"

"....."

"Or is it a 'clown'?"

After Professor W thought about it a bit, he slowly said, "I'm sure it's both of them."

To Be Continued..

#1 - This line is repeated because, in the raw text, the English appears first followed by the Japanese translation. Funnily enough, apparently Japanese people know enough English to not require this repetition for the Caterpillar's "Who are you?". Also, apologize for the crazy punctuation. There are single and double quotes all over the place in this opening passage.

#2 - very literal translation, but I might also use "I continued to smother my emotions."

#3 - This is another love-hate word. It's totally natural in Japanese to exclaim, "Oh, nostalgic!" but in English, it just sounds stupid. Maybe I should just give in and use "back in the day" or some such similar phrase.

#4 - near as I can tell, this is supposed to be Trois Rivières Rum which, according to <http://www.specialitybrands.com/Trois-Rivieres-Rum.htm> that site, actually IS a fermented beverage. However, I wonder if something can be "fresh" and "fermented" at the same time... Also interesting: Trois is part of the name.

- #5 - Unlike single MALT, which apparently uses exclusively malted barley, single CASK means the contents of the bottle of the finished product all came from the same barrel and typically applies bourbon, but sometimes is used for rye/malt whiskeys, too.
- #5.5 - Despite the way it sounds, they apparently go for spirits a day or two or whatever AFTER Quatre first sees Trowa's act. The only way I can explain this is: Quatre's seen Trowa's act but Trowa didn't notice Quatre. Eh.
- #6 - Literally, this says "Me, too!" or "Me, neither!" but this grammatical form cannot be used with Trowa's statement that he's not using the name "Trowa Barton" because Quatre was never Trowa, so I changed it.
- #7 - I have no idea why the raw text flip flops between using double Japanese quotes and double greater-than/less-than signs for denominating Gundam names, but it does. And glaringly so here, since the two styles are right next to each other.
- #8 - my canon is rusty, but I have the impression Operation Meteor started with the original 5 pilots descending to earth in their gundams, notably Heero in Wing. During the actual series, we see Quatre making Wing 0 and after Heero's already flown Wing, gets to use WIng 0...but that might be wrong.
- #9 - haaa, 唯一点 is what's written, but I can figure out what it is beyond the sum of its parts. Which is not often a very good indication of meaning.
- #10 - Well, the written word is "Princess Aurora" but the furigana (which is a superscript used to inform the reader USUALLY of how to read kanji that are either outside the usual vocabulary and/or being used with atypical readings, but it's also used as a standard practice in manga and the like targeted at an audience that may not know all the kanji being used.) says "Heero Yuy." Usually, I defer to the furigana but not here because I think it's interesting Heero's got this new code name.
- #11 - place holder footnote. I can't find anything for ショーフック 2 online, but I believe it's French because the "2" is furigana-ed with "deaux". The only "shou" I know of, however, are choux al a creme for "cream puff" and a handful of vegetable names. Neither of which seem apropos for a submersible ship.
- #12 - yeah, i think this part sounds dumb, too. I must not be getting the right feeling, because it sure as shit sounds like Catherine's got issues about beating the stuffing out of Duo because he's not in training (although Doktor T says Fat Max was doing Duo's training...) and then has a bloodlust filled gazed. But there it is, and there you are.
- #13 - I am aware the population of English speakers who actually address their siblings by their filial relationship is probably quite small (even smaller, perhaps, the ones deign to distinguish elder and younger). However, there IS a blatant politeness connotation in Japanese between calling your sibling by their NAME (which older siblings tend to do for younger ones) and their TITLE (which younger ones tend to do for older ones). More age equates higher status and requires a more "polite" pronoun.
- #14 - Er, this might mean "hand eye coordination" but this particular combo of kanji isn't in my dictionaries, and that seems like an odd word to lack.
- #15 - I poked around quite a bit on Wiki looking for a likely candidate for this feature of Mars and came up with bupkis XDDD The original Japanese word is フレクラフ諸島
- #16 - Again, just another social hierarchy thing going on here, but again, since "kun" and "chan" aren't used often (and Catherine flips her shit if you don't comply with her desires) I figure it's better to leave it in there. JUST in case you don't know, -kun in a diminutive ending typically given to young boys (although, apparently, students male or female may be called "Blahblah-kun." and I've know many parents to call their little boys "Blahblah-chan" because it's "cute.")

#17 - and this is where the need for social hierarchy demarcations and the desire to be familiar clash as "neesan" is polite for older but the "san" is replaced with "chan." No great implications beyond the fact that Duo seems to truly enjoy Naina's company.

#18 - The actual word is one I never quite figured out that is literally "calculation disposal" and this is apparently the main function of the ZERO system. If memory serves correct, all my English references to the ZERO system seem to say that ZERO calculated an infinite number of possible courses of actions and/or recommends the best one to take given a certain situation. In Frozen Teardrop, the system was used to combine two accounts of the same event and give the most truthful account, and in that regard, I suppose "doctor" is an okay way to describe what ZERO is doing here. eh.

#19 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulcan_cannon this gun looks cool, also, Heavyarms has some of these.

#20 - Literally, this is more like "My stomach is murderously empty" but let's be honest: so hungry I could eat a horse and chase the rider is pretty damn awesome.

#21 - Duo's comment about how hungry he is bisects Trowa's sentence and it sound *meh* to me in Japanese, but in English, I didn't think it came out very well (well, hell, the whole conversation between Duo and Naina is constantly breaking up Trowa's narration/vice-versa). So I stuck in that phrase to make it flow better. Literally, it just says "That's how it would be if it weren't for the chitter-chatter."

#22 - Culture note: you may know Japanese penchant for cleanliness: using oshibori to wipe hands clean before eating, removing shoes before entering a house (wiping the wheels of your suitcase before bringing it inside, washing the dog's feet after taking it for a walk), keeping shoes off any sort of seat, etc. This also means it's unusual for Japanese people to actually SIT on the ground. Paved, gravel, grass, whatever it is, they will have some sort of covering upon which to sit (and of course, you take your shoes off before getting ON that covering, too). Most typically, this is not a blanket, but a tarp which the Japanese call "shiito" after the English "sheet." Unlike a tarp, however, they're usually emblazoned with cute characters (Disney is by far the most prevalent and plain old blue sheets are unpopular as those are favored by the homeless) and quite often about a meter square for individual use. It is to this sort of ground covering to which Niana is referring.

#22.5 - Just in case you don't know, "cosplay" is when someone dressed up like a particular character. In the west, I believe the type of dress is exclusively from anime. In Japan, "cosplay" can be any kind of costume (the "cos" of "cosplay" comes from costume) and outside various nerd circles, seems to refer to people who like to role play with costumes for erotic purposes.

#23 - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daifugō> This is apparently "like" the American game "Asshole" or "President" but Wiki also says it's an American game. Seems pretty involved (especially if you're supposed to play it as a drinking game, but it seems like it's a family game in Japan). What's sort of interesting is that Trowa thinks the move being executed is "Eight Enders" but Quatre thinks it's "Revolution." In the card game, an eight enders move (which really DOES NOT need to have ALL the eights played at once, so perhaps that's what makes Quatre refuse Trowa's idea...funny that Trowa would HAVE an idea if he's unfamiliar with the game, though...) can (does?) end that specific "trick" (I'm not enough of a card player to know what a "trick" is).

#24 - well, I have never heard of a joker card having a warlock on it and a quick wiki image search showed only jokers and/or joker like things, but whatever.

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Nocturne of Sorrow IV



inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/10385.html



MC File 4 (middle part)

I had to make a decision calmly. There was a need for me to see the battlefield from an overall (lit: overlook) point of view and read the situation of the area appropriately. The two cards we had on the field were two "Jokers"--"Warlock" and "Pierrot." On the opposing side, the "Merciless Fairies" had twelve cards altogether--the Queen of Hearts, the Ace and Jack of Spades, four Eights, and I didn't know what the remaining five were. Currently, the battle between Warlock and Queen of Hearts had entered a deadlock. Two mars suits capable of flight modes were fast approaching our "Chouxhook 2" for "BLACKJACK." Additionally, but still at some distance, four Mars suits capable of submersion were approaching through the water for a "Revolution."

"Duo-kun is the one controlling the scene afterall, huh."

When Professor W had admired [Duo's actions] and said 'Now that's different,' this is apparently what he was talking about.

"That time [i.e. just now], the timing of his communication was intentional. He apportioned "BLACKJACK" and "Revolution" [#1] here; his goal was to alleviate his own burden."

So it was that brat who was dealing the cards. Meaning that once he understood his opponent the Queen of Hearts was a stronger enemy than expected, he commutated half of the enemies to come next. I could have agreed with Professor W's 'Ahh, I see,' but it was actually bothersome for us to have to clean up [after Duo].

"Professor, you don't have any strategic moves, do you?" I knew it was pointless to ask.

"I got nothing. Isn't it you, Doktor, who whould have known this situation would have come about?" [ALT: Wasn't something like this in your list of possibilities (lit: assumptions), Doktor?]

I had been conversely asked a question which I could not feasibly answer.

"....." I bit my tongue. Honestly, I hadn't made any assumptions. My whole objective was to 'Recapture Prometheus,' not 'Triumph Over the Merciless Fairies.' But the developments as they currently stood for achieving that purpose meant we couldn't help but acknowledge this battle 418/2/7-9. If that's the case, then it had been overly optimistic of me to estimate that Warlock alone could handle the heavy battle and strategic/tactical burden of taking on twelve Mars suits. That brat Duo pointed out that my judgement was 'dull' and, moreover, my deficiency in judgement came back [to bite me]. It's not like Heero Yuy would ever have done something like this. He'd characteristically take it all on by himself. He'd decide that was his duty and go fight. That is the determination of a noble soldier 418/3/10 [#2] A determined pilot doesn't falter. However, in Duo's case, he demanded our teamwork and forcibly ordered us to take on half of the six [#3] suits. The guy was oddly fresh with us--people whom he'd pretty much just met. There was an amount of affability, too. But no charm. No, it was better to say he was saucy [#4]. When I thought about him in the cockpit smiling a Cheshire cat smile, I felt my supposedly empty heart well up with even more 'anger.' But still, I wasn't thinking I'd put up with the weird stop-gap measures in a case like this.

"Roger--" I said quietly, standing up and taking the submersible aircraft carrier's control stick in hand.

"From here on out, battle operations will consider every possibility." I decided to show them just what a "JOKER" could do [#5].

"Attaboy, Doktor T!" Catherine clasped her hands and smiled.

First of all, how to shake off the "BLACKJACK." As for what kind of backup Duo, who was both 'game maker' [#6] and 'dealer' both, was seeking--that answer we could puzzle out for ourselves. That is, he'd wanted to direct the enemy's focus to us. As long as they knew the position of the submersible aircraft carrier, "Chouxhook 2", there was no question about the Ace and Jack of Spades attacking us with depth charges. If we dove deep and fast, we could eschew the first wave [attack], but we'd lose speed and sooner or later it was self-evident that the four Eights (spreading out) in the water would run us down. The water-adjusted Mars suits, with their easy maneuverability in small places, certainly had cast and ensnaring net from all four directions, and would surely be robbing us of the opportunity to attack. If that was the case--. We could play the 'clown' for a long time by surfacing and attacking the 'BLACKJACK.' And maybe--. This battle will become a "seesaw" game. The current circumstances are unfavorable, but sooner or later the time will come for us to have the advantage. But all we could do until that opportunity came knocking was to maintain the weird tightrope-walking-like behavior. In this case--it wasn't to my liking, but we could only take passive coping measures. However, we couldn't hold a high wire balance bar. It was all that impudent, initiative-taking brat's fault. And there were only a few seconds before our encounter with the approaching "BLACKJACK."

"Uptrim 40! Chouxhook 2, commence surfacing!"

I decided to launch all our anti-aircraft missiles at the same time as our surfacing. I didn't think it would be enough to stop them. I planned on making a preemptive attack and waiting to see what tack the [enemy] would take. However, a few meters from the surface of the water, the "BLACKJACK" had thrown down an enormous number of depth charges. They'd been dropped perfectly. There was a horrendous impact. It seemed as though several had been fired. Through the violent rocking of the ship, I did not release the control stick. My consciousness, however, was on maintaining equilibrium; our speed fell down a notch. That lead our angle of surfacing to lower and raise the probability of direct hits from the depth charges. No regrets. That is my pride. On the operation monitor, the red blinking launch points increased. Everything was my responsibility.

"Was that a mistake just now?" Professor W pointed out the delay in my navigating.

"Happens all the time on the high-wire."

I made no excuses. That was also my pride. It was a happy thing that the propeller and missile hangar and bow torpedo tubes were undamaged. Even as the [depth charge] launches kept increasing, I doggedly continued with the surfacing. I felt my age. I didn't think that there'd be a (place) when I could compensate for my mistakes from here on out. I felt I was (already) different from my former self. Chouxhook 2 finally broke through the water surface. Where we came up was a battle field [filled] with numerous columns of water caused by the explosions. The violently high seas were jolting and large. Even so, I somehow maintained stability and launched all missiles stored below deck. There wasn't time to fix my aim. The two shots in front of me didn't fire on account of the [previous] firing which made the storage hatch unable to open. As for the ten anti-aircraft missiles that hadn't fixed on a target, they flew left, right, and center, drawing various arcs in the red sky. I was holding onto the faint hope that at least one would land a lucky hit. But the Ace and Jack of Spades weren't about to give me the satisfaction. Every [missile] was evaded.

"Oh, pity, that," Professor W said tonelessly. He spoke like he expected them all to miss from the beginning. "That's surely because my assistance wasn't sufficient."

"....." I stayed quiet, thinking this was surely a time one ought to compliment his partner. The problem, however, was the move that came after "BLACKJACK." I immediately prepared to dive. Just then, Catherine reported from the radar monitor what she was looking at:

"The Ace and Jack of Spades have turned around, they're falling back into airspace."

"Really?" The second wave would be an arial bombardment. The first wave attack had been unexpectedly light

420/1/3-4. No, it might be better to think of it as tactical actions. On the sub-screen of the radar monitor, I confirmed that the two suits from "BLACKJACK" had turned around and flown away. Their goal [was/is?], on a tactical level, not only to keep "Chouxhook 2" under their thumbs 420/2/5, but also they were hoping for battle to conclude in the water.

"Did we [just] get caught?" Professor W came asking. The "BLACKJACK" certainly may have just been meant to lure us above the water.

"No, this suits us just fine."

It was within the realm of expectations. From the outset, I'd been shooting those four Eights. I didn't know if it was "Eight Enders" or "Revolution" but I wanted to get rid of those submarine-capable Mars suits first. "Go full speed ahead." Without switching to rapid submersion, I decided to [plunge] straight into the water at full battle speed.

I confirmed the tiny sun sinking down on the southeast horizon. Ahead of us I could see the nameless volcanic island Duo et al were on, and far behind it, Elysium Island.

"Neesan, I want you to inform me of the sonar response whenever necessary."

"OK! Leave it to me," Catherine replied briskly with an earphone in her left ear. Professor W was calm.

"Are you planning to careen [right into the water] just like this?"

"Yeah....."

Professor W seemed to already have read what I was thinking of doing.

"I think it's kind of risky."

"There's no such thing as a battle without risks."

"You're the same as always."

"While we're waiting, there's been no change to our high wire [act]." Making the large aircraft carrier Chouxhook 2 dive and charge [lead it to] meet resistance from the ocean current and lose remarkable speed. A water-borne battle also bore the risk of being swept away by an unexpected jet current. Another feasible possibility was for the Ace and Jack of Spades to turn around again and come attacking, but I suspected that they wouldn't. Because there was [an element of] danger in getting involved with the four Eights. So, where had they turned around and flown off to? The other "JOKER"--they may have headed towards "Warlock." In which case, [it was up to me] to make a killer pass. He ought to feel a little sorry about bossing around his older comrade. I prepared for my next move.

"(Fully) load torpedo tubes one and two!" Catherine confirmed the spiral sound via sonar.

"The four Eights are in a state of deployment/spreading out and are charging."

"Professor, what do you think those guys think of this ship's mobility?"

"Hmm. If [they have] the standard power of judgement, then they likely see us as merely a reckless special attack corps that won't evade [an attack]."

"....."

"But if they're calm pilots, I think they wouldn't be afraid and are calculating the torpedo timing."

"If they're the type of guys to decide on a "Revolution," then they're the latter." 421/1/11-12.

"Yes.....We are the "JOKER." The weakest. So they're taking us lightly. There's a chance to take advantage of that."

"Somehow dodging the first strike, that's crucial."

"Being somehow unhittable."

"Relax, I'm flying....." When Professor W heard that, he chuckled to himself.

"Well, I have faith in you, Doktor T. But accidents happen."

"....."

He seemed to be talking about my navigating mistake when we surfaced just then. There was a peculiarity in how that man took on the years. If he were the younger [Quatre], he'd probably be a little more respectful of his partner. Ahead of us, the four Eight's were spread out and traveling straight for us in one line.

"Sonar detection! The enemy has fired eight torpedoes!" Catherine reported calmly. The four Eights had launched the eight torpedoes that had been outfitted on both of their arms. Thanks to that, we could specify their distance and location.

"Roger." I dodged the eight torpedoes with [a move called a] tornado and continued by launching the two bow torpedoes.

"Perfect hit this time.....that's our Doktor." The timing of the tornado and torpedo launch was an extremely difficult move. I wasn't waiting for any compliments, but there probably had been a better way to say that. But I didn't have the time to [acknowledge] everything the Professor said.

"Nee-san!" Catherine immediately took the earphone out. The two torpedoes I'd fired blew up in front of the "Revolution." This was called a wired electric sound torpedo, and it could (steal) an enemy pilot's sight and hearing by issuing a vast volume of high frequency supersonic foam/bubbles over a large area. In a basic submersible, [the lieutenant in charge of] the sub-sonar would have to be immediately relieved, but that wasn't possible in the submersible Mars suits. There were no means for situations like these to be handled because of their [upgraded/improved] mobility [#7]. Now, in the area of the sea below, a big panic was supposed to be happening. If they were normal Mars suit pilots, they would surface and try to escape, but as could be expected of the "Revolution," they predicted they'd be sniped at as they ascended and instead appeared to be diving deeper into the ocean. They probably intended to wait for their "ears" and "eyes" to return to normal. There was there for an interval of several seconds.

"The four Eights are also (brilliant), huh.....I thought one at least would surface. It was a good bluff to fire all the missiles at first.....this is all according to Doktor's calculation, right?"

I'd decided to ignore any more ironic commentary. The results were alright, at any rate. Now, it was possible to break through at once. I purged the wires for the (wired electric sonic torpedoes) and gave Chouxhook 2 more speed. In the water immediately before us, the powerful, high speed jet current lay waiting. That earned us several minutes until the ["Revolution"] could pinpoint our location and track us.

Away on the distant horizon, the small sun was setting. Professor W spoke, his eyes narrowed against the golden light.

"Yeah.....this time, it's our turn to make the first move."

"Well, {Snow White} and "seven dwarves" [#8], right?"

"Of course they're there, but....." I returned. "Do you mean to pilot {Snow White}, Professor?"

"I can release Heero's bio-lock [#9].....couldn't even someone like me be allowed to make a hit if I hit the deck on my stomach and fired? 422/1/8-9"

Aside from the two "JOKER" cards in a deck, there were cases where a "white card" [#10] without any markings was included--that would be {Snow White}. We has one more different card ready, that [card] might be the "jackpot," but I couldn't deny that it could also [make us] "fold." I had no intention of playing Maurice Ravel's "Pavane Pour Une Infante Defunte" [#11].

"Nee-san, how's Duo?"

"About that....."

I followed her eyes and when I saw the monitor, I was amazed. Warlock and the Queen of Hearts were not fighting. Duo and Naina had left their cockpits and were contentedly stuffing their faces with sandwiches at the foot of their suits on a picnic sheet [#12].

"Maybe [the sandwiches] were about to go off." Professor W was smiling.

"That's one trick I can't do."

"That must be the height of Duo's concentration."

"No wonder his stamina (distribution) is so good."

I wanted to say he could knock it off with the [jabs at my expense].

Catherine was also dissatisfied, "Unbelievable! Those two are enemies, aren't they?"

I agreed with her sentiment, but I spoke the truth without blanching [#13], "But they're apparently [still] friends who grew up at the same orphanage."

"Their faces are smiling as they eat, but not their eyes. Perhaps Duo-kun is waiting for [the right] time?"

"Time?"

"The sun will be setting shortly....." That was the only (aim) that made sense.

Professor explained in easily understood terms to Catherine, "Warlock is at his best at night."

"But can't Naina Peacecraft predict as much?"

"That looks like Duo's special ability. He puts 'the connection of person to person' above all else. Everybody and anybody ends up following his pace, one after the other."

"Tell me, Professor....." The word connection alone couldn't explain that happy face. "How should we interpret the direction of that relationship?"

"I don't quite understand it myself." After thinking a bit, Professor W spoke, "Surely it could be a 'bond' couldn't it?"

Is that what it was? [That] something he had and we didn't. Even though they're enemies, even though they're in the battlefield, [he/they] couldn't imagine losing that essential relationship 422/3/8-9. We had endeavored to lose such relationships in the past.

Duo and Naina were discussing something. I enlarged the image of them to the greatest possible extent and put them on the monitor side by side.

"What are they saying?"

"Uh.....Duo-kun said, 'Whew, I'm stuffed. That was great.' He's giving his opinion on the sandwiches." The Professor was good at lip-reading.

"Mayonnaise and mustard are awesome.' 'Good.' 'But the chicken and ham were the best. Thanks.' 'Well, shall we get back to the battle?'" Professor's monotone continued dispassionately, "Wait a sec. Me, I'm not going to be indebted to you.' 'Debt?' 'I'll show you something good, Naina-nee-san.'"

The Duo displayed on the monitor pulled out a ten gallon hat from out of nowhere and turned it all around to have Naina confirm that it was empty.

"Okay, there's no tricks to [that hat],' she said....." And then, the number of ten gallon hats increased one after the other. There were six altogether, no seven. They were all lined up just as if they were to be sold in a roadside stall.

"Hey, that Christmas.....Naina-chan, you put a rabbit sticker on the wrapping, didn't you? You know I still got that."

Duo spread out the wrapping sheet that had been on top of the [one of the] hats until just now and gently, as if by magic, spread it out [over all the hats].

"Boopidee bahpidoo buu' uh, I can't read [his lips] well." It was probably some sort of incantation or spell. By that beamingly triumphant face, he was planning on showing us some sleight of hand.

"Naina-chan, which one does {Alice} want to meet?' 'Who is {Alice}?' 'Don't play dumb. Young Lady Winner, who else?' he said, but what if--" Katrine's name coming up so unexpected had me honestly surprised, too. The Cheshire Cat was playing the "hatter." The Queen of Hearts and then, Alice? An unfinished uneasiness flitted across the back of my mind.

"This is a pain so how about putting both out,' she says." When Duo removed the sheet, a stuffed rabbit with a pair of long ears came hopping out of each hat. They were white and brown rabbits. Altogether, there were fourteen, no fifteen? Huh? Sixteen.....no, they were increasing in number. There were already over twenty brown rabbits. Professor W put words to Duo's lips:

"Does Alice want {the rabbit with the broken watch}? Or the {March Hare}?"

"What's a March Hare?" As expected, I was flustered.

"Professor, hurry and start up {Snow White}! That guy's going to get right into it without [giving us] a signal!"

"Got it," so saying, the Professor ran off to the hangar. Now, I decided to believe my unmalicious, spiteful-speaking colleague 424/2/6-7<. We were supposed to make the first move, but once again, we were on coping [detail]. And we had to hurry to take control of the tide of war.

"Nee-san! What about the five remaining mars suits that are heading for us?"

"I can't distinguish the suits yet, but..... What? They're not headed this way!"

I had been my [modus operandi] to accept anything as being within the realm of possibilities from here on out, but everything and anything that brat did was far too wild. That guy had commenced the "Recover Prometheus Battle" at his stage. He was a naughty boy who utterly ate people [#14].

The "March Hares" were a metaphor for the maddeningly noisy mating season 424/3/8 [#15]. Sure enough, the number of brown rabbits that were loose in the field had doubled, tripled, infinitely multiplying. The seven white rabbits-their numbers didn't increase, but they did run towards the ocean from the Eastern horizon and disappeared. [I] was completely befuddled. Not just Naina. I was enchanted by Duo's magic. On the Western horizon, the evening

sun had already set. Night befell the volcanic island. Catherine spoke in a voice close to a shriek.

"Trowa! Look East!"

Well that was quite a jolt, to have my old handle screamed.

"The moon.....the moon.....the full moon....." On Mars' Eastern horizon, just where the white rabbits had disappeared, was not Phobos or Deimos but the pale satellite of earth--the Moon, a huge [image], slowly rose. The full moon sparkled brightly in the Mars night sky--it made for an image that deviated from what was otherwise utterly innocuous.

"Calm down, Nee-san.....that's an illusion that Warlock is showing us."

"B-but....."

Now, the wind sent clouds across the moon, making it dark for a moment. It was a hyper real celestial body. However, it was only we who had been born on Earth who admired that image. It wasn't a meaningless bluff. A feeling that was beyond anger and [more like] loathing sprang bubbling up [inside me].

"This is Doktor T!" I sent a message to Duo in the cockpit of Warlock. "You'd better not be betraying us, asshole!" However, it seemed even our [Chouxhook 2] camera eye had been scrupulously cracked by the {nanomachines}. 425/1/9-11. Looking back, I had several ideas [about who'd done that]. "What the hell are you planning?"

"Yo.....did you like that?"

In the darkness, [his] spiteful Cheshire Cat-like face came to mind. For a moment, it looked to me like he was sneering with his own wicked design.

"Don't answer a question with a question.....I'll ask you again, what are you doing?"

"The full moon is a good match for my partner.....that's what Father Crapswell said!"

Like father, like son 425/2/4. They're passing on really (boring) genes. I could stand that that was the reason for ruining the camera eye. While it wasn't like me, I wanted to tell him to quit screwing around. But standing on top of that volcanic island--the full moon as a background and that black cape streaming--made the Warlock's silhouette ominous and beautiful. The two beam scythes crossed over his head made me think of a wily vampire's eyes lit with demonic light.

The Queen of Hearts wasn't moving. Naina Peacecraft may have been (half-drunk) by Duo's magic show. No, [she was half-drunk] on him. She must have managed to take shelter somewhere safe.

The naughty boy with the flashing eyes spoke, "So, fighting in (humanoid weapons) is a game of wearing down the other? When night comes, I'll own it!" Captain Obvious reporting. Even I had a phrase when I was all about that sense of values. A pilot's reasoning [power] goes flying out the window in order to learn how to pilot a mad machine. Circumstances aside, anyone who is calmly able to continue murdering people is most definitely mad himself. To put it another way, it was more than sufficiently crazy to empty one's heart.

"And yet." I contacted him on the commlink. Just what did I want to say? Five mobile suits drew closer to Warlock. [They were t]he five unaccounted-for cards.

"See ya! Looks like the Worst Night Dance is about to start! Over and out!"

Before I could say anything, the link was cut [from his side]. Catherine checked the (machine shadows) from the data [collected from] the hacked weather satellite and reported.

"Denomination of five Mars suits! Ace of Diamonds, Ace of Clubs." We'd been dealt another pair of aces. "And the Six of Spades, Six of Diamonds, and Six of Clubs! [#17]" Those Sixes. That meant a full house, but--no, "6, 6, 6" had a different meaning. It might be a composite number [#18] or the "sign of the devil" [#19] from the Book of Revelation. I could imagine it could be taken as a clue. Catherine continued her reporting.

"Ace and Jack of Spades are coming flying in from over head! That 'BLACKJACK' has returned!"

That Worst Night Dance the Cheshire Cat Hatter spoke of had [arrived] beyond any doubt. No, it might be a night feast/banquet with the one-eyed jack and the Devil. Either way, the Warlock's odds were definitely bad. In any case, there was no way we could make Duo fight alone.

"Professor! Isn't Snow White online yet?" There was no response to my call. He probably hadn't released the "body response" Heero had locked on. [Heero] had likely locked it with a special code not even the Professor could release. [I] had absentmindedly forgotten, but that style was all Heero Yuy.

The triple Aces and Jack came attacking from the sky. The pair of Aces were joined by the four machines in the "BLACKJACK." I remembered that the Ace of Diamonds and Clubs both had either strengthened speed or strengthened heavy artillery. But that Duo seemed to be okay with either.

"Sooo, let's get this party started!" [#20]

That voice actually had gusto. That second--. From beneath the Warlock's cloak, a countless number of bats came out flapping. Thousands, tens of thousands of bats. Their ominousness matched the (night feast) [#21.5]. And that enormous black shadow--big enough to swallow the light from the mismatched full moon hanging bright over Mars--beat its wings and moved further up. The flock of bats went after the flying triple Aces and Jack of Spades. By the way, there are no bats in the wilds of Mars. Neither were they bats made by cloning. Those were incorporeal bats composed of nanomachines. They couldn't be hit or crushed. It was fantastic magic. I was surprised at such a handling technique. Looks like the brat's decided to prove his mettle. Under the light of the moon, it almost looked as if the four Mars suits were being covered by a (sentient) velvet cloth. Once they were coiled with the infinite number of bats, ultimately, flight would be impossible [for the suits; their machines] would stall and they would crash. And then the pilots could only emergency eject. In an instant, the four suits bowed out from the party.

"Hokay! Who's next!"

Without waiting for that invitation, the three heavy-equipment land-form Mars suits, the Sixes, came in for a surprise attack. Beam fire came from three directions. Flashes of light punched through the black cloak. Just then, Warlock fell down. He'd been done in disappointingly quickly. The cloak, crackling and sparking, covered the mountain top rock. It whipped in the wind. Only the cloak.....The mobile suit frame wasn't there. The three Sixes searched for the lost Warlock. There was no way we could have lost it with such bright moonlight, is probably what the pilots were thinking. But actually, this luminosity was fake. Really, it was darker, no stars in the sky and a profound darkness dominated. And "Warlock Darkness" continued to "Wonderland."

"Here! Over here!"

He purposely called out before the attack. That was the same as [when he'd fought] the Queen of Hearts. I didn't think it was plausible, maybe he'd prefaced that attack 427/3/1<.

"Where are you looking? I'm here!"

Duo's voice sounded like it had multiplied. All at once, the three Sixes turned to face the direction of the voice. There were about fifty hooded Warlocks waiting at the ready.

"Hey, don't say you're outnumbered! Cause it was you who outnumbered me first!"

[The fifty Warlocks] were, of course, [magic]. The split up and diffused March Hares took on the Warlock's shape and stood beside it. There was just the true [Warlock] within, but there was no way he'd have removed the cloak. There's no way that Duo would pull such an easy trick. What's more, in a battlefield saturated with nano particles, it was unthinkable to go without the cloak. Aside from the special stealth capabilities of the hooded cloak, it would shielded against nanodefensors and other super-ultrafine particles. In other words, Warlock had had a cloak beneath the cloak. No, looking closer, the cloak on the mountain top rock had disappeared. Perhaps he had never actually even been up there. There were no limits to how much that clown would poke fun at others. That was also a (skilled) technique of a first-rate con-man.

"Let's go!"

Close to fifty Duos' voices sounded as one. The three Sixes (desperately) returned to fighting with their beam canons. Upon receiving a direct hit from the beams, the nanomachine Warlock blew up. That blast mimicked the exaggerated flash of light just like a real blast; and then it disappeared. After it dispersed, however, it would reform in some hidden place. Hence, the number hadn't gone down in the least. Of course, it was merely an illusion. While there were very few, it was a huge corps that could attack 428/2/16-17. The three Sixes couldn't stop that attack. After all, our hand was the [almighty] "JOKER" card. Any "role" was possible. The beam canons also ran out of energy. The Devil Mars suits standing rooted at the mountain summit had already lost their will to fight by then. Then, the (whole of) Warlock suddenly appeared from a nearby crater.

"I'll take care of this!" [#21]

The three Sixes (cards) were slashed from chest to armpit and ripped apart. The duel beamscythes were swinging in beautiful arcs. Missing the (power parts) and cockpit was a minute technical amputation 428/3/3-4. However, that (amputation) couldn't have been done if the three Mars suits hadn't been rooted to the spot. Had that brat been waiting for that chance? He knew battlefield tactics throughly. In other words--the real Warlock had been hiding in the shadows of the volcano the whole time. It looked like beam canons shot through him from three directions, but really he was there waiting for their energy to run out and then to lose the will to fight. If that's so, that meant he was a pilot who had the appropriate tactical eye and [dirty] techniques and crazy tactics. He was, for these intents and purposes, a perfect pilot. But-- There was one (premonition) I just could not wipe away. The three Sixes--the Devil machines slowly collapses right there.

"Sorry! You aren't what I'm after!"

When I heard that chattering, it seemed like something in the depths of my heart proved true (lit: hit home). So, that was it after all. That's when--. A standard line of communication contacted me.

"This is Milu Peacecraft.....could you pick up?"

A large hover transport belonging to the Mars Federal Government approached. It was the vessel I'd been chasing all this time. I didn't have any intentions of picking up.

"Hey...you're finally intervening?"

It was Warlock's Duo that said that. Switching the main monitor [channel], the face of Miliardo and Noin's son filled the screen. The quiet youth was sitting in the cockpit of the transport hovercraft.

"I'm going to perform the "Clair du Lune" from Claude-Achille Debussy's Suite bergamasque [#22]. Please listen--no, please experience....."

Milu suddenly had a virtual keyboard before him and slowly, quietly began playing the piano song.

The pianissimo nocturne Clair de Lune flowed across the battlefield. It seemed that we'd been hacked into, the internal/bridge speakers of our ship could not be turned off.

"What he hell is he up to?" Catherine asked naively. There was no way I could know. However, Milu Peacecraft's performance permeated the heart. But me--my supposedly empty heart was roused by some kind of power. The echoing keys abounded with loquacity and color. It agreed/called to the circle of the full moon glowing with rainbow light. The upper register of the sad melody was perfectly clear. In it was a clear silence. It was probably a slight disorder of a chord not in the (sheet) music and the warped/distorted tempo and the lag in the gentle rhythm that conversely made it pleasant [to listen to] and changed the fantastic moonlit night an even more fascinating scene. It was like the tone filled the moon that wasn't even supposed to exist on this planet with its clear tone. Then, someone else contacted me on a different line.

"This is Katrine.....everyone, it's been quite a while.....not really thought. It was yesterday that I took off."

Katrine's innocent smiling face avec goggles appeared on the monitor.

"I've been thinking about you nonstop since last night.....I truly do not want to fight. But I want you to understand."

Even now, "Clair de Lune" played beautifully on. The party was taking place in a scenic spot 429/2/5<.

"Isn't it okay for me to hope for peace, too?"

I wasn't sure. That [little] worry in the bottom of my heart was growing ever bigger and more real. However much it was within the realm of possibilities. However self-evident it maybe be.

"Doktor T.....I shall use the machine you built." One mobile suit descended from the large hover transport. It sliced [right down the middle of the] full moon as it came down to stand on the ground. The swarm of fifty two warlocks surrounded the suit.

"I was waiting for you, Daughter of the House of Winner!"

"--So was I."

Make no mistake. My premonition was dead on.

"But don't get close, okay--"

It was my as-yet incomplete work-in-progress machine--{Prometheus}. It was covered with a hooded cloak of deep green. Deep within the hood, a pair of eyes sparkled seductively. On it's back was a giant cross. The long arm of the cross was a gatling gun, the short arm was a machine gun. I immediately opened a commlink and questioned the girl.

"Katrine! I hadn't prepared a cloak for that machine! Just where the hell did you get that?!"

"I got it from everyone, of course."

"Wha?!" That was patently hard to believe.

"You've already noticed, right.....among everyone, there is another traitor hiding."

I could think of someone. But I didn't have a shred of proof. Standing with such arrogance towards/directed to Prometheus 431/1/8.

"Aren't you just talking story?!"

The fifty-two warlocks attacked.

"I told you not to get close, didn't I?"

Prometheus' gatling gun blew fire. The horrendous (physical) shells smashed the fifty-two piece black cloak into pieces. Slightly faster than a second hand on a clock, the deep green cloak turned three hundred sixty degrees.

"I have no interest in small fry [like you]."

Faster than the blink of an eye, the nanomachine Warlocks vanished.

"You aren't interested in small fry....."

Warlock planted himself firmly in front of Prometheus.

"Welp, then you gotta face me!"

"That's a waste, Duo.....Nanomachine magic tricks won't work against me. Also, Prometheus has superior fire power."

"Well, won't know unless we try!"

Warlock attacked. The duel scythes split the air. Quick as a flash, Prometheus (seceded) to the rear and fired the gatling gun nonstop. Warlock swung the two beam scythes, drawing a double figure eight and kept evading the (actual) bullets.

"Looky here! What kind of fire power did you say you had, cuz I--"

Prometheus flipped the cross around (backward). In that long bazooka barrel, there was a loaded super-sized homing missile.

"--sorry, let me show you how it works."

Warlock was lured closer. There could be no escape. When I thought that--

The same time the violent explosion noise died, the performance of "Claire de Lune" ended.

"Thank you, Milu.....that fake moon looked like the real one."

Alice in Wonderland expressed her gratitude. The moon vanished from the night sky. Warlock left the party and true darkness ruled over the place. But the Worst Night Dance had only just begun--.

...To Be Continued...

#1 - Yes, I am aware that ONE OF THOSE IS ALL CAPS and the other Just Has The Initial Letter Capitalized. This is how it is written (in plain old English, no less) in the raw text.

#2 - Well, I'd venture to guess this might be "perfect soldier" except that "perfect" wasn't one of the options under the heading for this word in ye old dictionary.

#3 - Math fail on my part. This is probably my own mental block because, obviously, there are six MS gunning for Trowa's boat, but literally, the text looks like it says "half of six" which would be three which is a contradiction to the number of suits explicitly mentioned in BLACKJACK and Revolution. Guess this is just another quirky Japanese thing *headdesk*

#4 - Good lord, that's terrible! He's "fresh" or "saucy" or "sassy" but all those typically are applied to females, right? What's the word for a saucy male?

#5 - I know! He calls himself "pierrot" at the very start of the chapter and now, he's calling himself a "JOKER."

#6 - Near as I can tell, this is just one of those faux English words that get coined in Japan by the Japanese because Japanese isn't whack enough on its own. The only other comparable kind of word I can think of is a "mood maker" which, at least in social situations, is like the grease that keeps the wheels on the party bus going. I don't know if there actually is someone who generally gets attributed with this quality in an actual game of cards, though.

#7 - I think it is supposed to mean that the modifications made to make the mars suits water-worthy meant it was not possible for the pilots to change. But I wasn't aware that mobile suits had room for two pilots. Maybe the mars suits did (never seemed to be indicated as one of their features, but *shrug*)

#8 - Literally, the text says ジーベンツバーク七つの矮星 which is 7 of some kind of dwarf star? The only thing I could find for the first part "jiibentsubaaku" was a Benz GTO motorcycle type thing. So, I have no clue what this might be except some form of aide (seven, actually). I went with "seven dwarves" because that was something Katrine mentioned when she found Warlock and Snow White and tempted her to divide her maganacs 7 for Heero and all the rest for Duo, Jr.

#9 - Literally, this says "body response lock." But come on, how dorky does that sound (then again...they are fighting the "Merciless Fairies." Maybe someone ought to tell Sumizawa how horribly seven-year-old-girl the word "fairy" sounds....

#10 - According to Wikipedia, French Tarot cards come in packs of 78 cards, but the sheet upon which they are printed is large enough for 80 cards hence, some companies include two blank cards in the deck. I have never noticed this in any deck of playing cards I've ever seen/used/bought in the States or Japants. But why the hell would Sumizawa be thinking of French Tarot cards? Suspending reality to allow for creative license.

#11 - haaaaaa ha ha ha, playing this song is your entire damn goal, Trowa! "Pavane for a Dead Princess." And doesn't Trowa want Relena dead? At present, anyway? A "pavane" is a "slow dance."

#12 - Again, Japanese people at least always have (or fashion) some sort of ground covering, Typically, they are available in the form of a plastic tarp about one meter square.

#13 - Literally this is 顔色を変えず which is "without the color of the face changing." The dictionary says it means "to blanche" but I can't see Trowa blanching here, if anything, he'd be going red with rage. Eh.

#14 - I wonder if it might be better to say "He utterly burned people." Is that too nineties?

#15 - I have no clue, but the words on the page are concerned about metaphors and mating rabbits XDDD

#16 - It says "massugu higashi no chihei kara kaijou he sarihashiri" which is literally (corrected for English syntax) ran directly towards the ocean from the eastern horizon" which sure as hell sounds like they're going...west. In a few sentences, they describe another phenomenon that makes me confused about using directions as an adjective.

#17 - Yes, Sumizawa was calling them "clovers" before, but now, it says "club."

#18 - Back to high school algebra: a composite number is a positive integer that has a divisor other than one and itself.

#19 - Literally, it's says "number of the magical beast" but I can't help but think Sumizawa means "sign of the devil" since he follows up with the bit about The Book of Revelations.

#20 - Well, the dictionary says the word Junior uses is "to begin" but let's face it, this kid can't say anything that isn't contracted or bastardized in some way, right?

#21 - I have no idea what Junior says here. Given the context, I would assume it's supposed to be a Japanization of "alright" which is used today when, say, someone is the spotter for a large vehicle backing up (the spotter telling the

driver it's "alright" to keep backing up I suppose. Why they do this in English, I don't know). But a google search for the word used, もっらい yields no direct hits, but indirectly, seems to be a bastardization of "moraimono" which is like a "hand me down." That, however, doesn't make a lot of sense in THIS context where Junior's about to slice and dice the bad guys...

#21.5 - This "Worst Night Dance" is constantly referred to as a "dinner party" but I think a more fitting term might be "soiree" (funny Sumizawa didn't use THAT, given his penchant for fucking around with foreign languages, at least as far as names and numbers go). I'll try to use that from...the chapter released in December. But any references to a party or whatever is just a synonym for the Gloriousness that is Fighting in a Big Ass Suit.

#22 - a bergamasque or bergomask is a type of music (classical, dance; according to wikipedia)

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Nocturne of Sorrow V

 inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/10501.html

NOT REALLY EDITED because I'm going to be gone for two weeks and I don't want this hanging over my head on top of everything else. I think all the super wrong typos are okay, but there's probably more than a few words that are words, but not the words I meant so spell check doesn't catch them. Eh.



Anyway,
MC File 4 (last part)

We who were assigned "Operation Mythos" aimed to bring the chronic war and disputes plaguing Mars to an end. Not just the AC era Earth Sphere, but the MC era Mars also couldn't make "total pacifism" happen no matter how much they called for it. Certainly, everyone and their brother's uncle was becoming unhappy. It was caused by the existence of the Mars Federal Government's second president Relena Peacecraft and the "P.P.P." function. The trouble with this "total pacifism" is that, more than promoting demilitarization and nonviolence, it extols freedom and independence. Further, it's a problem that all exceptions aren't addressed because it is "total" [pacifism]. If it weren't for Preventer, the Earth Sphere's peace would likely be impossible. Only war can end war. Maintaining the peace after the fighting takes either control by a huge power or controlling revolutions that would secretly steam weapons. Preventer services are the latter. Desiring peace may have been Relena Peacecraft's bag 447/1/2-3, but at present, doing that robs the people of their freedom and independence. The majority of people aren't armed and they're the ones who'll be killed. And the worst case scenario--if the "P.P.P." is activated--of the two billion people that make up the whole of the Mars population, about half, i.e. one billion, would die. Mixed into the vaccine required to immigrate to Mars are several nanomachines and those are connected to the "P.P.P." It's unknown who or when or why this program was discovered or completed. However, it's known who spread the nanomachines. It was Mars Federal Government's first president, Dix Neuf Neuenheim, alias Miliardo. He schemed to take complete control by compelling [compliance via the tread of the P.P.P.] by having Relena in hand and the means to initiate [the P.P.P.] at any time. The structure of the P.P.P. is exceedingly simple. It spread via internet and it's possible for "P.P.P." to order the nanomachines from any (terminal monitor) or chell phone. Light conveys the order, or high frequency sound waves, simple vibrations. The order is one word: set. The nanomachines mass at one place within a person's blood vessels. That is its only function, but it causes thrombosis. That results in hardening of the arteries all over the body and causes brain and mycordial infarctions. Another problem is that this response (resonates) with other nanomachines, ones intended for medicinal purposes. In other words, it won't stop at just Mars beause there are people in the Earth Sphere who have been given medical nanomachines. in a matter of hours, a chain reaction would begin that would kill unsuspecting people regardless of their being on [Mars], Earth, or the colonies. It would lead to the genocide of roughly three billion people. It was AC 197, April 9th when this [reality] came to be known. It was the day after Relena Peacecraft's seventeenth birthday. It was discovered when the militant group calling itself "次の政府エピオン・ド・トロス" occupied the Cinq Kingdom castle. I didn't think I'll discuss the events of that day here. I'm not in a position to talk about anything that happened that day. From that da until the present, the "P.P.P." is programmed to run and the order to "set" will be given at the time of Relena Peacecraft's death. Neither suicide nor an unexpected accident can circumvent the programming. All she can do is to live forever. There is no way to release her from the program. There is an extremely difficult password [on the system]. The solitary exception is that Relena apparently dies peacefully 447/3/2-3<. The only way to maybe bypass the "setting" is if she herself wishes it and dies as if peacefully in her sleep. That slight possibility is attested to by her having been in a state of superficial animation inside {The Little Prince}. The probability of that [being the case] is in the single digits--no, less that that. As long as she hopes for total pacifism, will not willingly die. After all, she entered the hibernation capsule of her own volition in AC 197. While she was sleeping she was hoping the accursed program would be terminated. As if to follow after Relena was frozen, Heero Yuy used the {Sleeping Beauty} [capsule] and became Princess Aurora. What

foreboding did he have? Could Relena have asked him to do it? It was too (good?!) to have been pure luck. Decades later--MC22 Next Spring, Relena awoke. it's unknown who woke her. But there's not a quibble that @it was done] in a state of emergency. Dorothy T. Catalonia of the Earth Sphere United Nations determined that.

Operation Mythos. That was a careless war. Heero Yuy was deforsted and will (be made to) murder Relena Peacecraft. Relena wishes for that, too. [The chances of it working] are low, but it's worth a shot. Suppose it doesn't matter one whit if it's a "peaceful death." Ultimately, the plan is to put the remaining half of the Mars population under the rule of Earth once more.

There is no justice for us.
We have no ambition to conquer Mars.
We don't have the heart to make people happy.
I know there is nothing beyond this victory.
Neverhteless, all I can do if fight.

At present--the fighting wasn't over. The Worst Night Dance continued. We had the "Chouxhook 2" surface in the midnight ocean and made rounds of the battlefield that was the volcanic island. And then we stopped when we reached a position from which Prometheus was directly in front of us. our ship had no more useable weaponry remaining. Two missiles were left, but as the hanger hatch was still out of order, the couldn't be fired.

"What did you plan to do?" Catherine asked at my back.

"....." I couldn't answer immediately. I folded my arms and decided to wait and see for the time being.

In the center of the volcanic island, Prometheus with it's huge cross-shaped heavy artillery slung over its right shoulder suddenly stood up. It was held with east. It seemed as though Katrine was also waiting for something.

Ten minutes ago, Duo's {Warlock} went down in the ocean along with the homing missile Prometheus had fired. I had a feeling that guy was okay since there wasn't an explosion nor did he immediately surface. However, the four Eights of the "Revolution" were still there in the ocean. Now, they were probably dukeing it out even as they were getting tossed around by the jet current. The beam scythe could also be used in the water. It would be great if he showed his abilities, reading the current, feeling the enemy's movements, and having no regrets. There's no question he would win if he tried to screw driver with the two scythes. But all that only applied if he has the skills for submersed fighting. If he doesn't have that experience.....Oh well. Flounder, struggling, and bending over backwards suited that guy. Like his father, he had an awkward coolness [to him]. That would be just about good enough.

Prometheus still hadn't moved. Katrine was probably probing the "space heart." You could say that was her weak point. That one point was our only advantage. We were going to completely succeed 499/1/10. The Prometheus, like the one in the myths, is probably best described as a symbol of {betrayal}. However, this is the case if viewing from the Go's side, from man's point of view, he was a "culture hero" and it wouldn't be incorrect to say that he was an idealist pursuing freedom. It was the titan who gave mankind fire. From that time on, mankind flourished. Zeus, kind of the Olympus gods, was angry over the betrayal and treason. He had [Prometheus] chained to Mt. Caucasus and made him suffer by having eagles ((some sources say it was condors)) eat his organs. But, was it really right to have given man fire? Was the snake really evil for having given Eve the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden?

Was Prometheus, now an enemy standing before us, a traitor to Earth or the savor who wouls free Mars? Or was it that beautiful, ephemeral soldier?

Prometheus moved. Katrine appeared on the monitor.

"This is Katrine Oud [#1] Winner.....Doktor T, are you prepared?" She asked as she had the heavy cross-shaped canon's aim fixed on our ship.

"I'm not resigned to anything....." Thinking about it, that was probalby my intent from the very beginning. Again. "Since we've lost." Like always, the six letters that spelled "defeat" matched us perfectly. "Hurry up and fire.....Neither msyelf nor Catherine will run or hide."

"Are you going to surrender?"

Through the monitor, I caught glimpses of the admiration on Katrine's face.

"That's what I meant to say."

"Understood.....then lay down your arms and surrender. I don't want to hurt you."

"No," I said without hesitation.

"Huh?"

"I'll surrender but I won't lay down arms....."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I'll say it again: I surrender. But I will not give you {Snow White} or {Scheherazade}."

"What are you up to?"

I snorted, "Impressive.....you 'space heart.'"

The color drained from Katrine's face. Professor W's voice rang through the ship.

"{シーベンツバーク・赤} {Shiibentsu baaku [#2] rood [#3] furudoroo}.....fire!"

A second later, a red arrow enveloped in red-hot flames shot from the deck of Chouxhook 2. That red flash of light moved with incredible speed and mid-flight became a {fire bird} with beating wings that plowed through Prometheus. Instantaneously, Katrine laid down a barrage of gatling fire. The {fire bird} then scattered. As it was dispersed, however, sparks went flying and landed on Prometheus' cloak. Little stains spread across the deep green material.

"{七つの矮星・青} {Seven Waisei - Blue}, knocking.....set up.....drawing."

Again, the sound of a voice setting up the next arrow came from the {Snow White} cockpit. He'd somehow managed to make it in time. Professor W had cracked Heero's biolock and was piloting {Snow White}. I was relieved. Also, I regretted that I had doubted him, even for a second. But, the Professor's mind control was excellent--good enough to make even me doubt him. No doubt it had been the Professor who had prepared that deep green cloak. If he hadn't gone to such lengths, he wouldn't have fooled either me or Katrine--who could read his "space heart."

"It's Quatre in {Snow White}!.....my brother, Quatre?" Katrine's question was laced with disbelief. She'd been attacked by the person she'd believed was her "partner in betrayal." She'd want to hear/aask again. Regarding that point, the Professor confirmed from a different direction:

"I asked you before, didn't I.....are you living as you want to?"

Once KAtrine heard that voice, she seemed resigned.

"Yes--"

The blue eyes behind the goggled brimmed with fear.

"--(that time), you said [you] might die pursuing the answer to that."

I was there when those siblings had had that conversation. It was at that small hospital--the wood-crafted, bird house-like "Winner Hospital." It was run by a female doctor named Iria.

Professor W spoke coldly, "And I believe I said [you'd] surely find the answer if [you] lived." I felt that he was more displeased than usual. The "ZERO system" (loaded into) {Snow White} wouldn't/couldn't have anything to do with that. That man's (expiation consciousness) drowned out his "filial love" and "considerateness" more than was strictly necessary. On top of that, he denied asking for forgiveness (with tears and apologies). That man's tears were already frozen.

Katrine cried out, "But I!" It was certainly a (cry of the heart) close to a shriek. "I want everyone to be happier than I've ever been!"

That was the conclusion gentle Katrine espoused. It seemed we [i.e. Trowa and his partners] were included in that "everyone." She wished for the happiness of the one-time comrades she had betrayed. It's possible that her tears were also frozen. How was this girl was. It appeared that Professor W, confirming his volition, decided to take cool-headed action.

"Furudoroo.....release!"

Once again, an arrow of light shot from the deck. It was a {Blue Bird} clad in wings of sub-zero ice. In the midst of its orbit, the blue light deployed in four directions, stretching out in a cross that bore a close resemblance to the Cygnus. Stories remain saying that the cygnus is the incarnation of Zeus. Obviously that god had no intention of forgiving this titan. The glittering constellation widened over Prometheus' head; it was definitely pushing [out] air (that was close to freezing cold). Suddenly, the sparks staining the deep green cloak underwent a chemical change. Pale flames shot up. The nanodefensors cloak was burned up by that flame. I could see Prometheus within that pillar of white flame. It stood as if tortured by defeat and guilt. The unarmoured parts ([I'd been] in the process of developing) openly exposed the inner structure. It was a mad suit. Half the face was covered with a clown mask. You wouldn't be far off the mark to call that suit a {Gundam}. I didn't care about names. Prometheus was, for the time being, in a state of immobility. The attack used the ultimate temperature differences [caused by the] {Red Bird} and {Blue Bird} to make it hard [for Prometheus] to move.

"This is {Snow White}.....mission accomplished." The Professor reported in an emotionally pressed monotone. A rather difficult role had been foisted upon him. It's okay to come back, Quatre. You should be your usual, gentle self.

"Roger.....we'll handle the rest." There was no response from the Professor. Through the commlink, I could just hear the sound of his breathing as he slept. Professor W probably passed out in the cockpit. That was the result that followed such a mental state: between last night and now, the Professor had intentionally, constantly kept his heart closed. He broke off [his connection with his] "space heart"--even a second's worth of carelessness would immediately synchronized his [heart] with his sister's and allow them to share thoughts--right up until now. That is to say it was similar to a battle between "ZERO systems" continuing for one whole day. Controlling that, surpassing it, he caught an overwhelming victory. It was only normal to faint, wasn't it?

Turning around, I told Catherine, "Take {Scheherazade} out." It would be possible for her to take out that Prometheus only now that the nanodefensors were out of the equation. The incomplete Scheherazade was more than sufficient.

"Will you pilot?"

"Yes.....looks like I'm a match for the battlefield after all." That's the role of a clown like me.

That's when it happened.

The plaintive tones of a violin rang out. it was Revel's "Pavane of a Dead Princess." While it was a simple melody, the melody starting in major and finishing in minor flowed creatively and precariously and despairingly beautiful. This

performer's bowing was actually quite unique and I'd only heard it once before. When I heard it before, it was playing a waltz with a gypsy melody that (invited homesickness). It had been a song called "Endless Waltz."

"This is {Scheherazade}.....I'm going to attack."

On the screen appeared my "doppelganger"--the violinist who wore a rag-like knit cap. That violin had long ago been owned by Professor W and then bequeathed to Katrine. That song may have been intended for Katrine. He was nothing if not an earnest man.

"Phobos?" Catherine asked in surprise.

"Where did you come from?"

"I've been on the ship all along."

I.E. he hadn't gone with Master Chang on the "Voyage." Nobody ever listened to what I said around here.

"You can't! Disembark from {Scheherazade} immediately!"

"Miss Catherine, I believe your training will come in handy.....flexibility is the key to this machine."

For certain, the Scheherazade held an Arabian style short sword and had streamlined shape like a belly dancer that leant the machine to skilled close quarters combat. Originally, in addition to the janbiya, {Scheherazade} was supposed to have a crescent shaped long knife called a shamshir [#4], but no matter what we tried, the grip power software kept having trouble and it was left in its current state: unable to hold [a swordy type weapon]. Dancing assassin--[it was] an insane humanoid weapon only specialized for close quarters combat. There was no doubt that Phobos with his (accumulated) training at nine times Mars' gravity, would pilot better than me. Close quarters combat--no, it could only be described as a crazy style of fighting where the closeness felt like a distance. Thanks to Catherine's training, his knife handling also surpassed my own. I was better at being a target anyway. For just a second, I thought it might be a good idea to leave him to it. Yet I was somewhat uneasy. That guy didn't have a "reason to fight."

I spoke to the pilot in {Scheherazade}: he was still playing his violin.

"Trowa Phobos.....I do not give you permission to attack."

"You've got the wrong guy.....I'm not Trowa Phobos anymore." He ended his violin performance and continued speaking. "I'm Nanashi.....I'm giving up Phobos [#5]."

Did he think that was an interference with the importance of life? Was he returning again to the disposable [life] of the used rag?

"Kathy Po told me: the elderly and women are [even] more easily hurt than me."

The woman at the North Pole base? What an unlucky thing to say 453/1/11<.

"So, Doktor T, I will pilot {Scheherazade}."

There was his reluctance to be dealt with by an old man but much more so, he was thinking his heard was far stronger than my own. So that guy, now once again Nanashi, had eyes bright and clear.

"You mean to end the Nocturne?"

"I'm going to return the lady's violin. Along with a little payback....."

Payback? I didn't really know what he meant by that. Just then--Scheherazade flew off the deck of Chouxhook 2, leaving behind a glittering rainbow arc like the Aurora Borealis. The suit was wrapped in a translucent yet optically camouflaged hijab veil that was also a nanodefensor. That was what sparkled like the rainbow. Of course, that suit was also unfinished and the armor wasn't finished in several places. As the hijab veil was transparent, if that optical camouflage didn't move, the exposed machine parts looked strangely vulnerable. But that vulnerable outward appearance only served as proof of the real strength hidden within that only served to reject arrogant reassurances. Obviously, it was a crazy, mad machine. Like that rugrat Duo said: those who fight in humanoid weapons fight with crazy emotions. The suit just might be a good match for him. Being unfinished fit him to a T.

If I were to add one more thing, it would be that I am an inexperienced doctor. I couldn't be enlightened, couldn't see far into the future, didn't have a knack for things--about the same as that Nanashi. There was also a degree of awkwardness. That's why I chose to fight, isn't it? I was thinking I'd fight in place of all those people who couldn't fight. I don't hold hope for tomorrow. I don't despair [what happened] yesterday. I was doing all I could to live in the here and now. Because my heart was empty. Because I couldn't find the right words. If I had the emotions of an average person, I was supposed to be able to be a little more gentle, but I wasn't very good at that. If I was a clown, a smile would come to someone's face, right? If I could just do that, it would be enough. That (guy now going by) Nanashi likely wouldn't change his feelings, either. Right about now he was (killing) his heart, too, wasn't he? Wasn't he fighting just for the sake of making someone smile? All by himself? 453/3/10-11. He headed for the battle filed instead of me. I sent him off without so much as a word of advice. Even though he was me. Even though I was supposed to understand everything. Even though he needed a place to go home to. I couldn't forgive my unsympathetic self.

"Sorry, Nanashi....." I murmured in a voice quiet enough that Catherine wouldn't hear. On the volcanic island, Prometheus still stood motionless. Around it whirled the rainbow-colored Aurora Borealis. Its movement was elegant and beautiful. That sublime tempo was the "Pavane." Over and over again in my head, I heard that performance from just now. A stream of fireworks sparkled in Prometheus's giant cross-shaped heavy armament. Scheherazade's janbiya was driving at taking [Prometheus'] most effective close-range weapon out of commission. If you just wanted to break the thing, I could do it, but the skill needed to cleanly cut the joints between armor and parts and to cut off the inner operation-type circuitry was no mean feat. While retaining its original form, only the weapon function, were destroyed. In that condition, it would be possible to fix it even aboard our ship(s garage. Seems like [Nanashi] was performing me a kindness: he was thinking of me, who would be the one to fix [Prometheus] after it was collected. The janbiya fireworks next extended over the body of Prometheus. Small flashes of light glittered out. Scheherazade's rainbow dance. Undulating just like a snake, like a snuggling wind, swiftly flowing, it twined around Prometheus, sticking strangely close. In my experience, I'd never seen a humanoid weapon attack like that. This certainly was a crazy battle. As a final [act of] resistance, Katrine fired the missile from the still-exposed chest, but there was no way she could hit Scheherazade. The movement in Prometheus' left foot slowed and soon, stopped moving. It appeared that the severing of the operative circuitry had been successful. They had reached an end [to the battle]. Dear Katrine, you probably haven't slept a wink since last night. You must be considerably tired. The whole time, you've been trying to feel Quatre out with your "space heart." You took on the insane, miraculous machines {Snow White}, {Warlock}, and {Scheherazade} all by yourself. You've gone far beyond your mental and physical limits. So go ahead and sleep. You're a gentle girl. Like your brother, you're too gentle. It is for you that Nanashi is dancing a lullaby [454/2/6-7. You should escape to your dreams. Morning will come sooner if you only sleep. And you can come be a volunteer with us again. You're a good kid, please sleep. We'll always accept you. Close that memory in Nanashi's arms 454/3/2. Goodnight, Katrine.

"Take care of yourself....." Iria's words resounded in my head. "Because you are the only Katrine Oud Winner in the world." She murmured that with all the gentleness in the world.

I, on the other hand--. I was wondering about Duo, who was supposed to be fighting in the sea.

"I don't think it's really likely, but you don't suppose he's been done in, do you....."

"That boy?" Catherine asked in return. She sniggered and put a headphone to her ear. "From what I picked up via sonar, it wasn't an easy win, but he did win."

"Oh. Then we'll leave the rest to Nanashi and we'll collect {Warlock}....." As soon as I said that, Duo contacted us via mid-ocean wire commlink.

"This is Duo! I got rid of the [Four Eights]! They were pretty good!"

"Good job.....can you return to the ship [under your own power]?"

"Return? What about the Winner girl? Are you going to let Prometheus get away?"

"No, Nanashi just took care of it now."

"Ah, that Phobos guy.....didn't know he was such hot stuff--."

The commlink suddenly got truncated. I had a bad feeling [about that]. On the monitor, Milu Peacecraft's face appeared.

"I won't give up Katrine."

I didn't change my expression.

"Hn, that famous piece just now....." Milu stayed quiet. "'Clare de Lune', wasn't it?"

Milu spoke calmly with a cold voice, ".....shut up, Old man." [#7]

"Watch your language.....I'm not as nice as I appear." So saying, I checked the control stick and found it wasn't working. The propeller wasn't going, either. At some point, we'd been skillfully cracked. Everything on the main computer had stopped. Just then, the ship's internal lighting blacked out. Even the monitor blacked out and total darkness ruled. From the speaker, Milu's voice was all that could be heard.

"You don't know anything. You're wrong, all of you." [ibid]

We'd been totally done in. We were being guided to the Federal-owned large hovercraft. A tiny bit of light filtered through the windows. It was mortifying but it appeared that the Chouxhood 2 itself had been seized. It had happened when Milu played "Clare de Lune." That was probably the beginning of the cracking. I completely failed to notice. The first move had been snatched away again.

"Duo, Nanashi, run away!" I shouted at both of them. I didn't know if the communicator was alive or not, but I prayed they heard. "Nee-san, you need to escape, too!"

"No way, I won't be left behind."

Catherine seemed to have already figured out what I planned to do next. On this ship, there was only one apparatus that could be operated manually: the self-destruct switch. There was plenty of explosive to destroy the inner bridge. Additionally, there were still two missiles stored aboard Chouxhook 2 because the hangar hatch had malfunctioned. A well-set explosion would sink both this ship and {Snow White} and send them to the bottom of the sea. If it was just the Professor and {Snow White*}, they probably could find a way out of that mess alone. Then, they'd collect the medical capsule and go rescue Nanashi and them, I'd think.

"Okay.....if that's what you've decided, I accept." It seemed to sound like the Professor's voice 455/3/3. It wasn't like Catherine and me dying was a done deal. If we rushed out at the same time as the explosion, there was a chance we'd survive. It might hurt like hell, but with our physical abilities, we might make a good recovery. But that didn't change the fact that it was a dangerous gamble. However, to put that [idea] into action required mental

preparedness and timing. I would really have to make it up to Catherine.

There was no justice for us.

We didn't have the ambition to conquer Mars.

We didn't have the gentleness to make people happy.

Our hearts were empty so we didn't even have tears to shed.

We knew there was nothing beyond this victory. [#8]

Even to--.

I'd steeled myself.

"Shall we start, our last stage?" [#9] I put power into the finger that would hold the self-destruct switch. But there was a man seizing my hand.

".....Stop."

It was the one who was supposed to be sleeping in the medical capsule: Heero Yuy.

"Don't resist any more than you already have."

"Are you saying to let them catch us?"

The weak light coming in from the windows put shadows on the contours of Heero's face.

"That's not a problem," he spoke without blinking. "They'll catch us and take us to Elysium Island." Somehow, those eyes seemed wet to me. ".....we'll get close to Relena."

"....."

Catherine spoke, "Heero, can you really kill Relena Peacecraft?"

Heero's voice was the same as ever, "That's my duty....." It seemed like a single tear fell glitteringly from his face. "I will kill Relena--" Surely I'd seen wrong. "--I must kill her."

There was no way that that Heero Yuy would cry. But I did believe he had a heart. I couldn't say that he was following his emotions. But of the lot of us, he was the only one whose tears had not been frozen.

...To Be Continued...

#1 - just in case I miss correcting this later...I'm wondering about Katrine's middle name and Iria talks about why she has a middle name forEVER ago. I was under the impression the name was "wood" as in "woodwinds" but a katakana search shows there is an arabian style stringed instrument of the same name...based purely on spelling, I'd say THIS is her actual name: Oud. But I have to go back and check what Iria says...XDD

#2 - Scheherazade's "moves" are not in any language that I can ID or find any *meaningful* info about on the webz XDDD I'm doing a straight transliteration for the parts that I can't figure out.

#3 - and that's the Dutch word for "red" since it seemed the closest to the katakana there, and it's obviously a red color that would the shooting out here *sigh*

#4 - I don't know where Sumizawa gets his info on these weapons, but from what I glean from the wonderful web, a shamshir is far too long to ever be mistaken for a even the longest of knives. I dunno, maybe Sumizawa was Arabian in a past life or something and has insider knowledge that surpasses the what the masses have posted on Wikipedia. Who knows?! Or maybe he's just confusing the shamshir (which is an awesome looking swordy-sword)

and the janbiya (which is an awesome looking wide knifey-knife thing). Or something.

#5 - Er, I guess this is a "double entendre" where the words say "confusion" but the reading is "phobos" and we've already discussed how the word Phobos comes from the Greek word for "fear" and all that jazz back when we first met Mini!Trowa, so there you go. Isn't Japanese awesome?!

#6 - I don't really know what Sumizawa is trying to say here, but if I had to hazard a guess, I think it might be something to the effect of "Nanashi isn't totally trashing your ass because you're so nice" and/or "Nanashi is being nice to you by not totaling your gundam" or something like that.

#7 - Should it be interesting that Heero Yuy Prime says exactly this to the Romefeller guys when the twins deceive them?

#8 - This bit and the one at the beginning of the chapter are identical (except for the ending of the last sentence). It's 100% clear that Trowa says "US" in the first sentence, but it's NOT 100% clear if he's talking about this "US" for the rest of the passage or means just himself.

#9 - ugh, this is a horrible loan word that never actually refers to the physical *stage* as one might expect if one is speaking English, but whatever is going to take PLACE on said stage (the literal place or the figurative place). It's also used to refer to "sets" or "skits" in actual music/theatre settings.

SPECIAL PREQUEL



Several months after Endless Waltz—The Prequel until the tears freeze.

This month is a **SPECIAL EDITION!**

What happened to them before the MC era?!

NEW MOBILE WAR REPORT GUNDAM W —FROZEN TEARDROP—

SPECIAL PREQUEL

Interlude of the Heart

—Preventer 5— (Part.01)

Written by Katsuyuki Sumizawa

Character Illustrations by Sakura Asagi

Mechanical Design by Hajime Katoki

Original Planning by Hajime Yatate & Yoshiyuki Tomino

Cooperation by Bandai Hobby Division

AC-196 DECEMBER 26

A gunshot rang out out of nowhere.

Dekim Barton was shot in the back of the head and collapsed to the ground. Standing behind him was an adjutant.

“I’ve executed the rebel. I express my apologies for betraying His Excellency, Treize.” he said pensively as he saluted.

“Mariemaia, hold on!” Relena Darlian cried out as she embraced the small body of the young girl who collapsed.

“I was mistaken. I’m sorry.” she apologized earnestly while wincing from the pain of being shot in the chest. A happy yet weak smile filled her face. The sound of a music box could be heard somewhere. With her consciousness fading, Mariemaia knew it sound was wrapped in kindness like a lullaby.

“That music box... it was such a gentle song. I feel as though I can hear my mother’s voice...”

The one who had the music box was a wounded Heero Yuy.

“I’ll relieve you of your pain.”

“Heero!” Relena called out in disbelief the name of the pilot of the Wing Gundam Zero who was shot down not long ago.

He held a music box that played “Endless Waltz” in one hand and in the other, a pistol, his finger placed over the trigger.

“I thank you,” Mariemaia said, peacefully closing her eyes.

Heero set his sights on Mariemaia. The rhythm of the music box slowly started to cease. A sad and tender melody of Endless Waltz.

The tune ceased completely. As if that were the absolute signal, Heero pulled the trigger without hesitation.

“...!!”

It was a shocking scene.

However, Mariemaia was safe.

There weren't any bullets in Heero's gun.

“I've killed Mariemaia.” said quietly.

“I... I will never kill anyone ever again.” he continued, slowly lowering the gun in his hand.

Although the man completed his mission, he was at a loss for words.

“I don't have to anymore...”

Just as he said that, the mask of a soldier was cast aside and the lone young man collapsed to the floor. Relena caught him just in time.

“Heero!” she said, pulling him in close to her chest. The young boy covered in wounds closed his eyes, a sense of relief coming over his face. He slept with an innocent face, something that hadn't been shown to anyone until now.

Lady Une carried out Mariemaia with one of the soldiers.

“There's still hope for her! Take her to the doctor!”

Relena picked up the music box that had fallen out of the sleeping Heero's hand.

“Finally it's over.” she said, stroking his hair gently.

A tear fell from her eye and dropped onto the music box.

AC-197 JANUARY

Peace has returned to the people. Mariemaia is said to have been taken in by Lady Une and is quietly spending her days. And from this point on in history, weapons called mobile suits, including the Gundams, were never seen again.

“Well, it's good-bye for real, buddy.” Duo said with a satisfied look on his face. He gripped the Gundam's self-destruction switch in his hand.

He felt for this battle, the Gundam was no longer necessary. Trowa and Quatre felt the same.

The three nodded their heads and pressed the switches on the self-destruct device.

The Gundam Deathscythe Hell, Gundam Heavyarms Kai and Gundam Sandrock Kai exploded one after another.

“I've once again become nameless.” Trowa mumbled while watching the rising smoke. Quatre negated that right away.

“Trowa sounds fine to me. Why not keep it?”

“Names are things other people give ya. There's no point wasting time worrying about it.” Duo said to Trowa and Quatre giving them a thumbs up.

“What's important is having a place we can call home. Right?”

“Yeah, you’re right...”

There’s circus tent where Catherine is waiting in a colony. There, as expected I’ll probably be called Trowa Barton.

There will be a name.

“If I go back, maybe Catherine wouldn’t mind if I call her ‘sis’.” Trowa pondered.

If Quatre returns to space again as the heir of the Winner Family, there’ll be various jobs left behind.

“I have to welcome all the Maguanac’s home from Venus before that, huh?” he thought, not being fond of being head of the Winner Family.

“Maybe I’ll run away from home again...” he pondered.

Duo made a carefree living as a junker, living his life with just enough. Still, he didn’t throw away his thoughts of he’d like to do something to make someone happy some day.

“Maybe I should give being a jack of all trades a try... I might make a buck or two.”

The three of them, each with their own beliefs, returned to outer space.

* * * * *

“The era that went mad has ended, Nataku.” Standing in the old village of the Long Clan on Earth, WuFei pressed the self-destruct switch.

“May you rest in peace.” he said, reminded of a smiling Meiran. She could spend her time quietly now.

The Altron Gundam disappeared in a flash. WuFei stayed staring at it for some time.

“Now, where do I go from here?”

As he thought this, Sally Po was standing behind him.

“Hey, WuFei.”

WuFei looked back over his shoulder.

“It seems Noin and Zechs have disappeared somewhere. So, what do you say? Wanna come and work with me?”

“Do you mean work as a Preventer?”

“Why not?” he replied after grunting slightly.

AC-197 FEBRUARY

A spacecraft was heading toward Mars.

On it were Noin and Zechs.

“Are you sure? The terraforming project hasn’t even officially started yet.”

Since the fall of the resource satellite MO VII in the southern hemisphere of Mars twenty years ago, an atmosphere close to that of Earth seemed to have formed due to the multiplication of European algae. However, one still cannot go without a helmet as it’s only possible to live in the para-terraforming domes.

An immigration plan and urban planning haven't been implemented yet, and while there was a government body in name but not reality, it was all so delayed comparisons to space colony construction couldn't be helped. The fact of the matter is, Mars currently was not a place for which mankind could live.

"Relena's been working on it, and it won't be easy."

Zechs thought about his sister pursuing her ideals.

"That's why a dead person would be perfect for the job. Noin, are you sure ..."

You don't have to come along with me—the usual phrase he'd try stringing together.

But, Noin put her index finger on his lips, "Zechs, please don't make me repeat myself, again." She whispered.

Zechs was silent.

The truth was Noin had complicated feelings. Her father, Nove Neuenheim, was the original driving force for the Mars Terraforming Project. She disliked her father who was a utilitarian—giving profits a priority—and had a history of fleeing to Earth.

There was only a bitter recollection on Mars.

Still, there was no hesitation in doing this with her beloved Zechs. They agreed they'd return home. After all, they still had a mission as Preventers. They simply couldn't let Nove Neuenheim do as he pleased with Mars.

That was the thought process from the Earth's side.

Meanwhile, Zechs was bothered by the existence of the Gundam Epyon that had been hidden on Mars. The unit was entrusted to Zechs' old friend, Major Elev Onegel. Although he didn't consider the worst case scenario and dispose of it, but he thought it should have been blown up like the other Gundam pilots.

The two didn't need words anymore.

If these strong feelings of two people exist, then perhaps it may be paradise on the new grounds of Mars despite its severity.

No, it has to be.

AC-197 APRIL 7

That day, the Earth was very quiet.

The peacekeeping by the Preventers seemed to be going smoothly.

Particularly, here in Northern Europe, the Sanc Kingdom nothing at all happened. And so, it was natural to assume that Relena's 19th birthday party would end peacefully as well.

"Everyone, thank you all for coming here today." said Relena. She was wearing a trim, white dress as she politely addressed the nearly two hundred men and women gathered in the banquet hall.

Considering it's a birthday party for former World Nation head Queen Relena, it was quite modest and simple.

Heero was nowhere to be found. Neither was her brother Milliardo.

Although she invited those closest to her, she also invited politicians who would sooner or later become her political opponents as well as military personnel of the former Alliance Forces. Also in attendance were her friends from the

Saint Gabriel Institute, the mother who raised her, Marlene Darlian, someone who understands total pacifism: Dorothy Catalonia, the head of the Preventers Lady Une, and Mariemaia who was recovering from her wounds in a wheelchair.

Each of their faces were filled with calm relief.

They seemed to believe that a lasting peace would likely continue on.

The gentle sunlight of spring coming from the window wrapped them in its warmth.

Just then, an armed group of twenty camouflaged men burst through the door. All of them held machine guns and had sunglasses and scarves concealing their faces. Several women in the room let out screams upon seeing them. The men standing behind these women moved in front of them. Some even tried resisting.

However, one of the militants raised his submachine gun overhead, and fired it at the extravagant chandelier on the ceiling. When the countless shards of glass rained down on the people, the noisy assembly hall turned silent.

The goal of the armed group became clear only through this behavior.

“Who are you people?!” Relena said without hesitation.

There wasn’t anyone among them who answered the question. Keeping silent was an eloquent declaration of their intentions. If they had no intention to respond with any kind of discussion,

A man wearing sunglasses with long blonde hair who appeared to be the groups leader calmly stared at Relena.

“...”

Relena had a hunch that the man’s face resembled her brother Milliardo.

Of course she understood at once that it’s another person entirely given the atmosphere created. However, she didn’t notice that was intentional.

It was several hours later that the Executive Office of the President in Brussels was notified of the armed groups statement.

“We, the ‘Epyon de Telos,’ have occupied the Sanc Kingdom castle. Our demands are as follows: the release of our imprisoned comrades, the official acknowledgement of Secret Clause 203, Part 51* and the immediate breakup of the said governing agency and the budget from AC-196 to AC-197 for that government agency as ransom. If these demands are not met within 72 hours, we will detonate a nuclear warhead left behind by the Alliance Forces. That is all!”

* * * * *

Secret Clause 203, Part 51 referred to the details surrounding the formation of a special agency to prevent war and their activities recorded therein. In other words, the agency was none other than Preventer. Of course, the budget expenses for this secret intelligence are carried out in absolute secrecy. By disclosing that to the public, dissolving the organization and informing the populace is the same as losing methods of peacekeeping for the future. And to pay the ransom simply could not be done. It was an impossible demand. The executives at the President’s office decided to firmly reject this and gave a special order to Preventer

“Retrieve the nuclear warhead and rescue the hostages.”

A resulting investigation determined that the nuclear weapon in question was genuine. It was a narrow area nuclear explosive device used for cut mining on the resource satellites at the asteroid belts between Mars and Jupiter. The

bomb has very little residual radioactivity. Even though it can be used in confined spaces, there's no doubt that the Sanc Kingdom would be leveled in an instant.

"I never thought it'd be something left behind by the Alliance Forces. I wonder if this is intentional political propaganda. "

"Indeed." WuFei said upon hearing Sally Po's report. He was usually calm.

"Manten kakai' {瞞天過海}, huh? Seems like their target is something different."

"What do you mean?"

"Deceive heaven and cross the ocean."

"So you're saying...?"

WuFei gave a tiresome reply.

"Their goal is to buy more time. They ask unreasonable demands from our side and while we're running around like a chicken with its head cut off, they're likely intending to carry out their real objective."

"Take over the Earth Sphere, huh?"

Around this time, WuFei was flying around the L-4 colony sector on another mission. Sally, on the other hand, was orbiting the moon. They were the only two Preventer agents who could freely move as their director, Lady Une, was currently being taken hostage.

"Although they're calling themselves the 'Epyon de Telos', they must be terrorists in disguise. We don't have to release their comrades, give ourselves up or prepare the money for that matter."

"Still, the fact is an armed group has taken 200 hostages and barricaded themselves in the castle."

"If we forget about the hostages, I can go finish this right now..."

"No! That's not acceptable!"

"So shall we join forces with them and take over the world?" WuFei joked with a serious face.

"Yeah, real funny... There must be another way?"

"Force our way in." WuFei said with clear eyes.

Sally couldn't think of any other way.

"As I thought, we'd have no choice..."

"Can you call for backup?"

"I'm organizing a strike team."

Sally was calculating in her head the number of people she could possibly call on.

"How many do you need? I can get 1000 people together within 48 hours."

"By then the Sanc Kingdom will be a mushroom cloud."

"Then I'll get 500 in 24 hours!"

"We hardly need that many to take over a castle." WuFei said, a steadfast look on his face.

"Five, including myself, will be enough."

As one would expect, Sally replied in shock, "Five?! Only Five people?!"

"We don't have much time. I'll tell you where to find them."

When he said this, Sally finally realized the five people he meant.

"Because it's a fairly large area to cover, I'll help you too."

"Right. I'll meet with them personally and ask for their help."

"Otherwise they won't move either."

* * * * *

Several hours later, Sally paid a visit to Duo Maxwell by herself, as indicated by Wufei. The place she was told was a Junk shop in the L-2 colony cluster.

"He's not here..." the young woman named Hilde Schbeiker responded, somewhat pensively. She looked down as she continued, "He wandered off, as usual. He won't be back for a while."

Sally couldn't find the words to respond to her.

As for being in a position to ask someone to cooperate with Preventer, she felt it was the worst, cowardly and irresponsible thing to ask but, it had to be done.

"The boy you like left a gaping hole in your heart." She couldn't help but think.

In the end, she left, having been told nothing. However, she headed to another location after hearing about it from Wufei.

"If he's not there, another possibility is a place where you can see the moon."

Viewing the lunar surface from a colony is a very merciless world of death. Is it because the God of Death has a fondness for such scenery?

The place Sally headed for was the outer wall near the space port. There, Duo sat isolated staring at the huge surface of the moon in his astro suit. His tiny figure carried his lonely shadow, something she often noticed on the Peacemillion.

"Hey! Long time no see!" she heard him say blankly.

After three months, the two met again.

"I have a job for you, Mr. Jack of All Trades."

"Heh, not if it's going to be a pain." Duo replied, uninterested as he continued gazing at the moon.

A smile filled Sally's face replied in alluring voice, "You'll like the reward."

She understood. The meddler that was Duo just wanted the "reward" to be an excuse.

* * * * *

On the top floor of the Winner trading company on an L-4 colony, Quatre Raberba Winner was plowing through work as company president at his desk. His eyes passing over the first quarter sanction documents as he approved them. Such simple work was nothing but a pain for him. Although Quatre was savoir-faire for everything, when it came to managing a company, he crashed into a seemingly insurmountable wall. Maybe it was a fatal lacking as a son and heir to the Winner Family.

"If someone can act as an agent, then I don't have to be here, right?" Which would mean he "didn't do anything and left it to a subordinate". So, Quatre didn't like giving up that easily and was making an effort to the best of his abilities to finish the work.

Without a knock, the door to his office opened.

"Could you close the door?"

A breeze came in from outside and hurled the papers on the desk into the air.

"It's taken me three days just to read these files!" Quatre said, his voice rising unusually.

"Got a lot of work?" said Wufei, closing the door.

"W-Wufei!" Quatre rejoiced as he shot up from his seat at their unexpected reunion. Wufei folded his arms and looked outside.

"Something troublesome happened. I was going to ask for your help."

"Something troublesome...?"

The view from the top wasn't bad.

"I won't force you. And, I have no time for persuasion."

"You need me?!"

Wufei returned his gaze to Quatre.

"You more than anyone..." he said.

"I'll go! I'll do anything!" Quatre replied immediately.

"I was just thinking this isn't me."

When a secretary appeared with the latest approval documents, the two were nowhere to be found, the documents left in an avalanche on his desk.

* * * * *

The Circus had come to an L-5 colony, something he was fortunate to notice earlier.

According to Wufei's intel, it appeared to be in an L-3 colony. They nearly headed from L-4 to the furthest place, wasting time. With the latest intel in hand, Quatre and Wufei paid Trowa a visit.

"All right... let's go." Trowa said following the meeting with them. Nevertheless, he didn't waver.

"Wait, Trowa! It's almost time for your act!" Catherine Bloom called out to stop them.

Wufei greeted her, "Thank you for that unpalatable soup."

If it were the old Wufei, such a thing might not have been said. But, in front of Trowa he was someone else.

More than a year ago on Peacemillion, Wufei was told, "At the very least, give her some sort of greeting. It's easy to hurt a woman's feelings."

With that in mind, it may seem something like unpleasant towards Trowa but it wasn't. Catherine, had a keen sense for such sentiments.

"Hey! If anything happens to Trowa I'll feed you that soup again!"

Wufei laughed.

"Is she self-conscious over that tasteless soup?"

Standing between them, Quatre looked at his wristwatch.

"Let's hurry. Only 50 hours to their deadline."

"You're right..."

"Are you sure about this?" Wufei asked Trowa again.

"Don't worry."

Catherine was always letting him go.

"She's just my guardian."

* * * * *

Relena's birthday on April 8th ended without hardly anything happening. The former Gundam pilots spent it moving to Earth. Some were calling it, to an extent, a third "Operation Meteor." Although they had come and gone between the colonies and Earth numerous times, it was their third time descending all together. The first was already well known and the second was during the battle at Brussels...

AC-197 APRIL 9

Sally and Duo were on a small shuttle descending to Earth. Neither one of them could find Heero anywhere. Prior to their entry into the atmosphere, they reported to Quatre on the matter.

"Oh, Heero wouldn't sit still at a time like this... Don't worry, he'll show up for sure. Meanwhile, please hurry to the rendez-vous point." he replied smiling.

Sally believed in Quatre's assessment of the situation.

"Seems we better do like he says, huh?" Duo said from the seat next to her. Although he had a dissatisfied look on his face, he understood all too well.

"He has a soft spot for her... But, even though he's desperately searching, it's really just more hassle than it's worth."

Sally gave a sarcastic laugh at Duo's innocence.

"True, but despite his pointless work but, he'll calculate his hourly wages exactly and only ask for that." {this line is so not correct}

“Right, right.”

Duo’s cheerfulness was a relief during the difficult struggle they were in. It was strange and hopeful, somehow brimming with courage.

* * * * *

Eight hours remained until the time limit was up.

On an extravagant passenger boat floating in the Sanc Kingdom bay, a room of the ship had been converted into a primary operations control room for the Preventers. From the deck, they were able to do a complete sweep of the Sanc Kingdom castle in one go. In the bay was another passenger boat and many civilian boats anchored about.

“If this mission fails, it won’t be just those guys in the castle, but they people in the bay too.”

“Quite the serious mission...” Wufei and Quatre could do nothing but endure the pressure.

Trowa was investigating the outskirts of the castle.

“While we may get fairly deep inside, we don’t know where they’re keeping the two hundred hostages...”

“Video cameras installed everywhere with very few blind spots and twenty armed soldiers keeping watch.” Trowa reported to Quatre upon his return.

“Thank you, Trowa.”

During the hour by hour changes in the situation, Quatre gathered information as best he could and worked out a hostage rescue operation.

“I suppose rushing in with tanks and mortars is out of the question.” Trowa suggested, typical of his gaudy combat strongpoints.

“We’ll prioritize human life in this mission—there will be no casualties. Of course, we won’t let them use the nuke either.”

* * * * *

The hostages were separated into four rooms of 50 people each and secured. Two men with machine guns were put in charge of each of the rooms. Their presence warning them that ‘any sudden movements means and they’ll be shot instantly.’ Apart from those people, specific individuals were taken to the nuclear bomb shelter in the basement. Relena Darlian and Marlene Darlian, the mother who raised her. Rounding out the three was Pargan, their long-serving butler. Pargan believed in ‘duty until death’ to protect Relena and Marlene.

“Please trust in my skills...”

He believed he could stick close to the two men guarding them, take their weapons and lead Relena and Marlene from there.

“Even though I may be old, I’m not quite that rusty.”

“You won’t, pagan. I will not allow any rash actions on our end otherwise it will cause trouble for everyone.”

“But.”

The group finally arrived at the underground shelter. Waiting for them there was the long blond haired leader. It was the man Relena noticed looked like Milliardo in the beginning.

“Welcome, Relena Peacecraft.” the man said removing his sunglasses and mask.

A distinct nose, thin lips and blue eyes. It was all just like Milliardo.

“Master Milliardo!” Pargan muttered, unable to hide his surprise.

“What do you think? I look just like your brother, right?”

“What do you plan to do? Who are you?” Relena inquired in a calm voice.

Laughing to himself, he replied, “Please excuse me. My name is Dixneuf Neuenheim.”

“...”

“I am a someone who is attempting to bring perfect peace to the Earth Sphere and Mars.”

“And what in the world would you use us for?”

“I’d like you to activate a certain program.”

Dixneuf produced a small, old-type computer before Relena.

“The password is PEACECRAFT X 2 HEERO YUY.”

On the monitor was an image of a Norwegian Forest Cat. The cat gave a soft meow.

“Sam...” Pargan muttered, horrified with what he saw.

* * *

The VTOL that Sally and Duo were on touched down on the passenger boat.

“Heero still isn’t here?” Duo asked, looking at the members who greeted them on the deck.

“No, he just arrived.” Quatre answered with a smile.

The sea suddenly swelled and a red unit rose to the surface.

“T-that’s! It can’t be!”

Duo was shocked.

“OZ-08MMS Cancer?” Trowa politely responded with the units name.

The hatch opened from the top part of the Cancer and Heero appeared.

He was wearing a Preventer unicorn though they didn’t know where he got it from.

“...”

His cheeks were soaked from the waves splash.

“Am I late?” he asked, wiping off the wet spots with the back of his right hand. It was as though he didn’t want them to see his real face.

“No, there’s still time. We’re glad you came, Heero.” Quatre replied immediately.

“Hey! Is this some kind of joke?!” Duo protested, pointing with his finger at the Cancer.

“According to records, it’s a machine that shouldn’t exist.” Sally laughed albeit bewildered.

“Hey, hey. Don’t go yanking my chain, Ms. Preventer. What good is it if we let that sorta thing loose?!”

“Quit yelling” Wufei said, folding his arms and turning away from Duo.

“He probably gathered the parts from the wreckage that sunk to the bottom of the ocean and assembled it himself.”

“Whatever the case, you better control it perfectly. Christ.”

There was no end to Duo’s quibbles.

“You’re just like a spoiled brat who’s had his toys taken away, Duo.”

“Ah, my bad. But still!”

Heero fired the wire gun, the point of the magnet burhsing past Duo’s face as it fastened to the body of the VTOL craft behind him.

Duo fell silent without a thought.

As the wire wound up, Heero effortlessly glided down to the deck. His astounding physical abilities hand’t changed a bit.

“The bastard...”

When it comes to shutting Duo up, there was no one other than Duo.

Ignoring Duo who was grinding his teeth next to him, he looked straight at Quatre.”

“Fill me in on the situation.” he said in his cool, cold voice.

To be continued...

WILL HEERO AND THE OTHERS RESCUE RELENA SAFELY?!

Notation: *機密事項二〇三の51号を公表し ≡ I haven’t the slightest idea. No. 51 of confidential information 203?
What?